CARE FOR YOUR HIGH-SPEED DENTAL HANDPIECE

by Barbara Boyle, iM3

Appropriate turbine (or Chuck) care is critical for longevity of your high-speed handpiece. Understanding proper handpiece use, oiling vs. not, and bur use are major factors in taking care of your turbines.

OILING

Any planned dental cases should start with the oiling of your handpieces (please note: not all handpieces require the same type of lubrication. Refer to your high speed handpiece’s user manual for oiling instructions). Ideally, high speed handpieces should be oiled every 30 minutes of use. For iM3 handpieces, we recommend to put 2-3 drops of oil in the smaller of the 2 larger holes, in the base of the handpiece, then run the handpiece for about 15-20 seconds to make sure the oil is well distributed within the turbine. If the handpiece isn’t correctly lubricated, you may hear a slightly lower pitch while the handpiece is in use. Please remember; you can’t over-oil a handpiece, but you CAN under-oil one. The latter will cost you in replacement turbines.

BUR USAGE

Bur use is another major factor in turbine care. Did you know that burs are recommended as a ONE TIME use product?! That’s right... that same bur you’ve been using for 10 years... is now blunt and you are trying to push a steel bar through a tooth instead of cutting it! Change it, it’ll speed up the cutting process and change your world, guaranteed! When you continue to reuse burs, you are shortening the life of your turbine causing major wear and tear, ultimately decreasing the life of the turbine. You also want to be sure that the bur is fully seated into the chuck tube. If it is not fully seated, the bur can bounce around on the inside and ruin your turbine.

There are many different brands of burs and turbines. Turbines are generally specific to handpiece manufacturers so the prices may vary. Because burs come in different size packages, we’ll use iM3 pricing as an example. Our regular burs (eg. 701L or #2 Round) come in packs of 5 and are $14.25, which comes to $2.85 per bur. Our turbines run about $275, and depending on the age of the handpiece, it may have to be shipped into our service department to have the turbine replaced in-house. If you divide $2.85 by $275, you get 96.49, meaning you can get 96 burs/patients done for the same amount of one turbine! Save yourself and MAKE yourself some money by using new burs for each patient.

Changing burs for each patient is a new concept to many veterinarians. It’s good practice to always have either a backup high speed handpiece or turbine in case your turbine should quit during a procedure. If you use proper techniques, change out burs for each patient and ensure the burs are seated correctly into the handpiece, then you should be able to maximize the lifespan of your turbine!

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