

Sterilization of medical devices — Validation and routine control of sterilization by irradiation

The European Standard EN 552:1994, with the incorporation of amendments A1:1999 and A2:2000, has the status of a British Standard

ICS 11.080.01

Cooperating organizations

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This British Standard, having been prepared under the direction of the Health Care Standards Policy Committee, was published under the authority of the Standards Board and comes into effect on 15 November 1994

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Amendments issued since publication

Amd. No.	Date	Comments
10623	September 1999	
13085	June 2001	Indicated by a sideline

The following BSI references relate to the work on this standard:
Committee reference HCC/67
Draft for comment 91/57778 DC

ISBN 0 580 23202 6

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National foreword

This British Standard has been prepared under the direction of the Health Care Standards Policy Committee and is the English language version of EN 552:1994 *Sterilization of medical devices — Validation and routine control of sterilization by irradiation*, and its amendment A1 published by the European Committee for Standardization (CEN).

EN 552 was produced as a result of international discussions in which the United Kingdom took an active part.

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Summary of pages

This document comprises a front cover, an inside front cover, pages i and ii, the EN title page, pages 2 to 30, an inside back cover and a back cover.

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UDC 615.478.73

Descriptors: Medical equipment, sterilization, irradiation, gamma radiation, definitions, qualification, inspection, specifications

English version

Sterilization of medical devices — Validation and routine control of sterilization by irradiation

(includes amendments A1:1999 and A2:2000)

Stérilisation de dispositifs médicaux —
Validation et contrôle de routine de la
stérilisation par irradiation
(inclut l'amendements A1:1999 et A2:2000)

Sterilisation von Medizinprodukten —
Validierung und Routineüberwachung für die
Sterilisation mit Strahlen
(enthält Änderungen A1:1999 und A2:2000)

This European Standard was approved by CEN on 1994-06-27 its amendment A1 was approved by CEN on 1999-04-16, and its amendment A2 was approved by CEN on 2000-10-27. CEN members are bound to comply with the CEN/CENELEC Internal Regulations which stipulate the conditions for giving this European Standard the status of a national standard without any alteration.

Up-to-date lists and bibliographical references concerning such national standards may be obtained on application to the Central Secretariat or to any CEN member.

This European Standard exists in three official versions (English, French, German). A version in any other language made by translation under the responsibility of a CEN member into its own language and notified to the Central Secretariat has the same status as the official versions.

CEN members are the national standards bodies of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom.

CEN

European Committee for Standardization
Comité Européen de Normalisation
Europäisches Komitee für Normung

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Ref. No. EN 552:1994 + A1:1999 + A2:2000 E

Foreword

This European Standard has been prepared by the Technical Committee CEN/TC 204 *Sterilization of Medical Devices*, the Secretariat of which is held by BSI.

This European Standard has been prepared under a mandate given to CEN by the European Commission and the European Free Trade Association, and supports essential requirements of EC Directive(s).

This standard has been considered by CEN/TC 204 as one of a sequence of European Standards concerned with three common sterilization processes and their control. These standards are:

EN 550, *Sterilization of medical devices — Validation and routine control of ethylene oxide sterilization*.

EN 552, *Sterilization of medical devices — Validation and routine control of sterilization by irradiation*.

EN 554, *Sterilization of medical devices — Validation and routine control of sterilization by moist heat*.

EN 556, *Sterilization of medical devices — Requirements for medical devices to be labelled "STERILE"*.

In this European Standard the terms defined in clause 3 are in italic type.

This European Standard shall be given the status of a national standard, either by publication of an identical text or by endorsement, at the latest by December 1994, and conflicting national standards shall be withdrawn at the latest by December 1994.

According to the CEN/CENELEC Internal Regulations, the following countries are bound to implement this European Standard: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom.

Foreword to amendment A1

This amendment EN 552:1994/A1:1999 to EN 552:1994 has been prepared by Technical Committee CEN/TC 204, Sterilization of medical devices, the Secretariat of which is held by BSI.

This amendment to the European Standard EN 552:1994 shall be given the status of a national standard, either by publication of an identical text or by endorsement, at the latest by November 1999, and conflicting national standards shall be withdrawn at the latest by November 1999.

This amendment to the European Standard EN 552:1994 has been prepared under a mandate given to CEN by the European Commission and the European Free Trade Association, and supports essential requirements of EU Directive(s).

According to the CEN/CENELEC Internal Regulations, the national standards organizations of the following countries are bound to implement this European Standard: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Foreword to amendment A2

This amendment EN 552:1994/A2:2000 to EN 552:1994 has been prepared by Technical Committee CEN/TC 204, Sterilization of medical devices, the Secretariat of which is held by BSI.

This amendment to the European Standard EN 552:1994 has been prepared under a mandate given to CEN by the European Commission and the European Free Trade Association, and supports essential requirement of EU Directive(s).

This European Standard shall be given the status of a national standard, either by publication of an identical text or by endorsement, at the latest by May 2001, and conflicting national standards shall be withdrawn at the latest by May 2001.

According to the CEN/CENELEC Internal Regulations, the national standards organizations of the following countries are bound to implement this European Standard: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The amendment to EN 552:1994 has been prepared to resolve differences in interpretation in the technical requirements for establishing the sterilizing dose. This amendment has been prepared in accordance with Resolution 2/1998 of CEN TC 204.

The intention of this amendment is to confirm that the form of radiation to be used for routine processing has to be used in establishing the sterilizing dose.

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Introduction

A *sterile* product item is one which is free of viable micro-organisms. The European Standards for medical devices require, when it is necessary to supply a *sterile* product item, that adventitious microbiological contamination of medical devices from all sources is minimized by all practical means. Even so, product items produced under standard manufacturing conditions in accordance with the requirements for quality systems for *medical devices* (see EN 46001 or EN 46002) may, prior to sterilization, have micro-organisms on them, albeit in low numbers. Such product items are non-sterile. The purpose of sterilization processing is to inactivate the microbiological contaminants and thereby transform the non-sterile items into *sterile* ones.

The inactivation of a pure culture of micro-organisms by the physical and/or chemical agents used to sterilize *medical devices* often approximates to an exponential relationship; inevitably this means that there is always a finite probability that a micro-organism may survive regardless of the extent of treatment applied. For a given treatment, the probability of survival is determined by the number and resistance of micro-organisms and by the environment in which the organisms exist during treatment. It follows that the sterility of any one item in a population of items subjected to sterilization processing cannot be guaranteed and the sterility of the processed population of items has to be defined in terms of the probability of the existence of a non-sterile item in that population. The value taken by this probability is specified elsewhere (see EN 556). However, the principles specified in this standard are applicable irrespective of the stated probability.

Requirements for the quality system for the design/development, production, installation and servicing of *medical devices* are given in EN 46001 and EN 46002 which supplement the EN 29000 series of European Standards.

The EN 29000 series of standards designates certain processes used in manufacture as “special” in that the results cannot be fully verified by subsequent inspection and testing of the product. Sterilization is an example of a special process because process efficacy cannot be verified by inspection and testing of the product. For this reason, sterilization processes have to be validated before use, the performance of the process monitored routinely and the equipment maintained.

It is important to be aware that exposure to a properly validated and accurately controlled sterilization process is not the only factor associated with the provision of reliable assurance that the product is *sterile* and, in this respect, suitable for its intended use. Attention has also to be given to a number of factors including the microbiological status (*bioburden*) of incoming raw materials and/or components, their subsequent storage and to the control of the environment in which the product is manufactured, assembled and packaged.

The object of this European Standard is standardization in the field of *validation* and routine monitoring of radiation sterilization processes and procedures that are carried out by those who sterilize *medical devices*. The *validation* of sterilization procedures presupposes that the sterilization equipment complies with appropriate specifications.

This standard contains requirements for the *validation* and routine monitoring of sterilization by irradiation; guidance on the application of this standard is offered in informative Annex A.

NOTE The requirements are the obligatory parts of this standard in that these are to be observed if compliance is to be achieved. The guidance given in Annex A is not obligatory and it is not provided as a check list for auditors.

This standard describes the requirements for assuring that the activities associated with the process of radiation sterilization are properly performed. These activities comprise documented work programmes designed to demonstrate that the radiation sterilization process, operating within specified limits, will consistently yield products treated with predetermined minimum and maximum doses.

Radiation sterilization is a physical process, involving the exposure of a product to high energy radiation. The product packaged in sealed units is exposed, in specially designed equipment, to gamma rays from cobalt 60 or caesium 137 radionuclides, or to a beam from an electron generator.

Properly applied, radiation sterilization is a safe and reliable industrial sterilization process.

1 Scope

1.1 This European Standard specifies requirements for the *validation*, process control and monitoring of the radiation sterilization of *medical devices*. It is applicable to continuous and batch type gamma *irradiators* using the radionuclides ^{60}Co or ^{137}Cs and to *irradiators* using electrons, at or below an energy level of 10 MeV, generated from machine sources.

1.2 This European Standard specifies the requirements which ensure that a predetermined dose is consistently absorbed by product presented to the sterilization process.

1.3 This European Standard does not describe a quality assurance system for control of all stages of manufacture.

NOTE Attention is drawn to the standards for quality systems (see EN 46001 or EN 46002) which control all stages of manufacture including the sterilization process. It is not a requirement of this standard to have a complete quality system during manufacture but certain elements of such a system are required and these are normatively referenced at appropriate places in the text.

1.4 This European Standard covers the determination of the maximum dose but does not cover specifically the assessment of the suitability of a product for its intended use after radiation sterilization.

1.5 This European Standard does not cover radiation protection requirements associated with operating irradiation plants.

NOTE Attention is drawn to the existence in some countries of national regulations laying down safety requirements when operating irradiation plants.

2 Normative references

This European Standard incorporates by dated or undated reference, provisions from other publications. These normative references are cited at the appropriate places in the text and the publications are listed hereafter. For dated references, subsequent amendments to or revisions of any of these publications apply to this European Standard only when incorporated in it by amendment or revision. For undated references the latest edition of the publication referred to applies.

EN 556¹⁾, *Sterilization of medical devices — Requirements for medical devices to be labelled “STERILE”*.

EN 1174-1¹⁾, *Sterilization of medical devices — Estimation of the population of micro-organisms on product — Part 1: Requirements*.

EN 29001:1987, *Quality systems — Model for quality assurance in design/development, production, installation and servicing*.

EN 29002:1987, *Quality systems — Model for quality assurance in production and installation*.

EN 46001:1993, *Particular requirements for the application of EN 29001 for medical devices*.

EN 46002:1993, *Particular requirements for the application of EN 29002 for medical devices*.

3 Definitions

For the purposes of this standard the following definitions apply.

3.1

absorbed dose

quantity of radiation energy imparted per unit mass of matter

NOTE The unit of absorbed dose is the gray (Gy) where 1 gray is equivalent to the absorption of 1 joule per kilogram (= 100 rad).

3.2

accumulated dose

sum of the *absorbed doses* regardless of whether the exposure to radiation is continuous or discontinuous

3.3

average beam current

time-averaged current produced by an electron beam generator

¹⁾ In preparation.

3.4

batch

defined quantity of bulk, intermediate or finished product that is intended or purported to be uniform in character and quality and which has been produced during a defined cycle of manufacture

NOTE Each *batch* is identified by a unique number or code.

3.5

batch (type) irradiator

irradiator which cannot be loaded or unloaded with product whilst the *irradiator* is operating

3.6

bioburden

population of viable micro-organisms on a product and/or a package

NOTE In the context of irradiation sterilization, *bioburden* is determined immediately prior to sterilization.

3.7

bulk density

mass of the product and all associated packaging in the *irradiation container* divided by the volume determined by the dimensions of the outermost packaging

3.8

calibration

comparison of a measurement system or device of unknown accuracy to a measurement system or device of a known accuracy to detect, correlate, report or eliminate by adjustment, any variation from the required performance limits of the unverified measurement system or device

3.9

commissioning

see *installation qualification*

3.10

continuous (type) irradiator

irradiator which can be loaded and unloaded with product whilst the *irradiator* is operating

3.11

dose

see *absorbed dose*

3.12

dose distribution

spatial variation in *absorbed dose* throughout a defined region and material

3.13

dose mapping

exercise conducted to determine the distribution of radiation dose throughout a load of product or simulated product of specified density, arranged in an *irradiation container* in a defined configuration

3.14

dosimeter

material or device having a reproducible measurable response to radiation, which can be used to measure the absorbed dose at a given location

3.15

dosimetric system

system comprising the *dosimeters* and the measuring devices to be used for dose measurement

3.16

dosimetry

measurement of *absorbed dose* by the use of *dosimeters*

3.17**electron beam**

continuous or pulsed stream of high energy electrons

3.18**electron energy**

average kinetic energy of the electrons

3.19**installation qualification; commissioning**

obtaining and documenting evidence that equipment has been provided and installed in accordance with its specifications and that it functions within pre-determined limits when operated in accordance with the operational instructions

3.20**irradiation container**

outermost container in which the product is irradiated

3.21**irradiator**

assembly that includes the source of radiation, conveyor and source mechanisms, safety devices, shield, and which permits safe and reliable sterilization processing

3.22**irradiator operator**

company or body responsible for delivery of a specified dose to *medical devices* (product)

3.23**medical device**

(the definition given in EN 46001 applies)

3.24**national standard**

standard recognized by an official national decision as the basis for fixing the value(s), in a country, of all other standards of the quantity concerned

NOTE The *national standard* in a country is often a *primary standard* (3.28).

3.25**parametric release**

declaring product as “sterile”, based on physical process data rather than on the basis of sample testing or biological indicator results

3.26**performance qualification**

obtaining and documenting evidence that the equipment as commissioned will produce acceptable product when operated according to the process specification

3.27**primary manufacturer**

company or body responsible for the fabrication, performance and safety of a *medical device*

3.28**primary standard**

standard that is designated or widely acknowledged as having the highest metrological qualities and whose values are accepted without reference to other standards

3.29**product category**

- 1) for sterilization by exposure to gamma radiation, products of similar bulk density exhibiting a similar pattern of dose distribution
- 2) for sterilization by exposure to electron radiation, products of similar *maximum surface weight* exhibiting a similar pattern of dose distribution