Contamination refers to the presence of harmful microorganisms or foreign material (like blood, tissue, dirt, or bodily fluids) on instruments or surfaces. It can be:

* Visible signs:
  + Dried blood, tissue, or body fluids
  + Stains or residue on instruments
  + Debris in crevices, joints, or hinges
* Invisible (microscopic):
  + Even when items look clean, tiny particles or microorganisms may still be present

Common places where contamination hides:

* Hinges and joints of instruments
* Inside lumens or tubing
* Grooves and articulations of forceps or scissors
* Between parts of complex or disassembled tools

How to Prevent Contamination

1. Immediately Remove Gross Soil

* Wipe or rinse instruments soon after use to prevent drying of blood/tissue
* Pre-clean in patient-care areas if heavily soiled

2. Follow Proper Cleaning Procedures

* Use water, detergent, or enzymatic cleaners
* Clean all surfaces, especially hidden areas
* Disassemble instruments with multiple parts
* Use ultrasonic cleaners or washer-disinfectors when possible

3. Use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

* Always wear gloves, gowns, face shields, and eye protection
* Use forceps or tongs for sharps — never reach in with hands

4. Handle with Clean Techniques

* Separate clean and dirty areas with physical barriers
* Use designated clean zones for packaging and sterilizing
* Avoid touching cleaned items with contaminated gloves or tools

5. Monitor Air Quality and Environment

* Maintain negative pressure in decontamination rooms
* Ensure proper air exchanges per hour
* Keep sterile storage dry, with controlled temperature and humidity

6. Proper Packaging

* Use sterile wraps, pouches, or rigid containers
* Wrap correctly to avoid gaps and allow sterilant penetration

7. Sterilize According to Guidelines

* Load sterilizers properly for full exposure to sterilant
* Use manufacturer’s instructions for device-specific requirements