



# OPEN SESAME!

CHEMICAL SHELF LIFE AND USE LIFE

ENZYMATIC EXPERT SERIES

 **BEYOND**  
CLEAN



Peggy Spitzer AAS, BA, MA.Ed.  
Clinical Education Manager, Certol Intl.

## OPEN SESAME! CHEMICAL SHELF LIFE AND USE LIFE

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### **How long is your chemical good for after opening the bottle?**

This question may be posed to a sterile processing technician during an audit or survey resulting in a panicked call to the chemical manufacturer.

Surveyors continue to focus on high level disinfectants (HLD) such as gluteraldehydes and OPA products due to issues with misuse and poor documentation. Instructions for some brands of HLDs require dating the product bottle when first opened as this date determines both shelf life and use life for that bottle of HLD.

For most brands of low/intermediate level disinfectants and detergents, **shelf life** is determined by the expiration date marked on the container by the manufacturer. Opening a container of low/intermediate level disinfectant or detergent does not typically change the expiration or shelf life. The clinic user does not need to mark a date when opening low/intermediate level disinfectants and detergents unless directed to do so on the label.

Shelf life for most chemicals may be affected by storage conditions or if containers are left open so check and follow manufacturer label instructions.

For concentrated low/intermediate level disinfectants and detergents, **use life** is the span of time the diluted chemical will be effective for use. Check product label use instructions for information on use life. Sometimes soil load or temperature will affect use life.

Technicians will be more confident when answering surveyor questions after training and return demonstration for chemicals used in the department.

*Beyond Clean Enzymatic Expert Biography:*

**PEGGY SPITZER, AAS, BA, MA.ED.**

**CLINICAL EDUCATION MANAGER  
CERTOL INTERNATIONAL**



Peggy Spitzer is a Colorado native with over 30 years of combined experience as a healthcare provider, college faculty and clinic manager. Currently she is clinical education manager at Certol Intl., a manufacturer of detergents and disinfectants for healthcare. She develops and presents education programs to hospital and dental professional groups focusing on infection prevention, instrument processing and best practices for chemicals. Peggy is a past president, past secretary and current treasurer of the Rocky Mountain Central Sterile Chapter promoting education and certification for Sterile Processing professionals. She is an active speaker for APIC and Sterile Processing professional groups and consultant to the Colorado State Dental Board. A special highlight was speaking at the national IAHCSSMM convention in 2019.

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