

Office

Maintenance: Dental Office Labs

While the items in the dental lab are not critical to the day to day operations like a compressor, vacuum or autoclave are, they still need to be maintained to prevent inconvenient down times in the ability to make bleach trays, trim models and drain the sink without it clogging and stinking. The typical dental lab has three key equipment items that need to be maintained: A - Model Trimmer, B - Plaster Traps, C - Vacuum former. There are other items that are not as universal in dental labs such as dust collectors and lab handpieces that need to be maintained, but in this article we are going to deal with the three most universally used items.



A. Model Trimmers

The Grinding Wheel:

Model Trimmers come with a variety of trimming wheels and water sources. The most common utilize a single spray bar and a standard coarse or medium grit wheel. In order to keep the wheel clean, enough water needs to be supplied to the wheel during use so it does not develop a clay like coating while trimming. Make sure to turn the water up as high as possible without it splattering all over the operator. Once finished trimming, let the wheel turn for several seconds with plenty of water to rinse it.

The Drain:

As models are trimmed, the stone gathers in the bottom of the trimmer. With plenty of water, most of the stone will flow out of the drain and into the plaster trap. Even with plenty of water, stone can still build up in the bottom of the trimmer and should be cleaned out periodically. We recommend a monthly cleaning in offices that use the trimmer heavily, such as ortho offices. A quarterly cleaning is usually sufficient for general use offices. And if your office rarely trims your models, annually will probably do it. Regardless, this cleaning will prevent an eventual clog that is much more difficult and messy to clean.

B. Plaster Traps

Fixed Plumbing Styles: Crescent Plaster Traps These traps have a fixed lid tied into the plumbing fittings. The lid has a bucket that is fastened to the lid by wing nut bolts. The bucket then needs blocks of wood to support the weight. The bucket requires a liner with a water spill valve. These traps, when full, require you to cut the spill valve to drain off excess water into a cup or bucket. Then the wing nuts are loosened so the bucket can be dropped down from the lid. The blocks are then removed and the bucket comes free. The liner then is removed and thrown away and a new liner is inserted. The bucket is fastened again with the wing nuts and the blocks are secured. These traps will generally last a year in general use offices and quarterly to semi-annually in an ortho office.



Fixed plumbing - removable trap bottles. (Gleco Traps): These traps are certified by the plumbing association. They have a fitting that is hard plumbed to the existing plumbing fittings. The assembly has a valve that drains off the excess water allowing the trap bottle to be unscrewed from the fitting. The bottle is then capped and disposed of and a new bottle is screwed into place. A gasket remains in the fitting and periodically needs to be removed, cleaned and lubed with soap. Replacements are available. The Gleco trap allows the staff to visibly check the sediment level in the jar. When it reaches the line, it's time to change the trap out.



Flexible Plumbing Trap-Eze traps These traps have flexible drain hoses attached to the existing plumbing. The loose ends fit into two rubber friction grip fittings in the top of a 5 gallon or 3.5 gallon plaster trap bucket. The bucket has a large capacity for stone and sediment and is easy to visibly monitor the sediment levels. When the bucket gets 3/4 full, it should be replaced. Keeping a towel handy, with gloved hands, remove one of the flexible hoses from the top of the trap. Catch excess water in the towel or a cup if you're quick enough. Once the excess water has drained off, remove the remaining hose. Remove the old bucket and recap it with the caps that come on the refill bucket. Discard the old bucket in dumpster and replace with new bucket.



C. Vacuum Formers:

Vacuum Formers have very little maintenance. It's a good idea to have a spare gasket on hand so when the old one wears out, you are prepared. A common gasket that fits most standard vacuum formers is the square 5" x 5" Omni Vac Gasket Item # - 1560015. You may want to have your account representative look at your unit and suggest the correct gasket for your model.