



Handle with great care

The way in which a surgical blade is handled prior to its use can determine how effectively it performs during use.

There are a number of ways in which the cutting edge of a surgical blade or scalpel can become damaged once it has been removed from its protective foil packet or tray. This damage can lead to the loss of the initial "keenness" when the surgeon makes his opening incision and a lack of durability leading to more unnecessary blade changes throughout the procedure.

The main cause of this problem is a general mis-handling of the blade through a lack of education and awareness amongst the theatre team of just how finely balanced the cutting edge of the surgical blade actually is.

The damage sustained may be microscopic and not visible to the naked eye so in order to highlight this we have prepared a set of images at CATRA with 2000x resolutions.

We have also prepared a set of guidelines and recommendations on best practice for handling the surgical blade or scalpel to help prevent damage both prior to and during use.

Swann-Morton offer in house training in Best Practice when handling surgical blades also incorporating an introduction to safety engineered devices to assist in the reduction of accidental sharps injuries.

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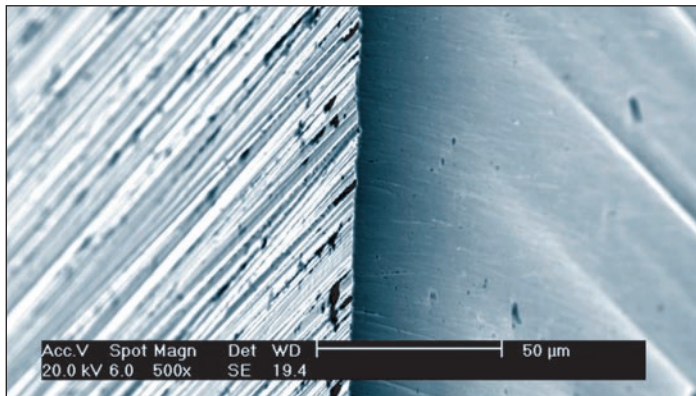
ONE OF THE WORLD'S LEADING SURGICAL BLADE MANUFACTURERS

Take a closer look at some of the effects of 'careless' handling

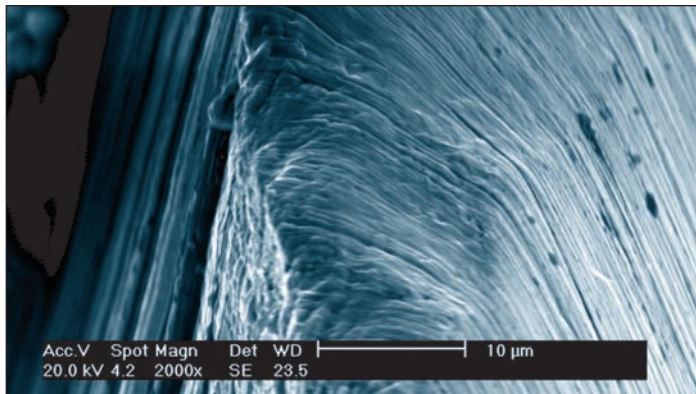
Here are a few observations which you may wish to try and identify in your own working environment and maybe you can help us to help yourself and your colleagues to reduce the occurrence of such problems in the future.

BEFORE USE

PRISTINE SCALPEL BLADE EDGE



DROPPED ONCE INTO METAL TRAY

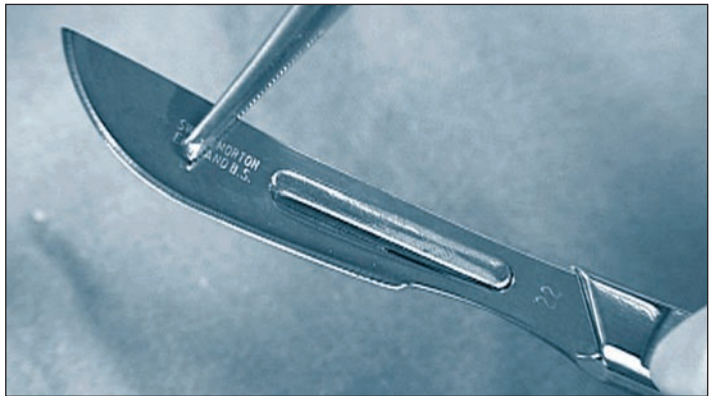


1 When removing the blade from the protective foil packet make sure it is not dropped into a metal bowl or container for this can remove the initial "keenness" of the cutting edge before it has been fitted to the handle.

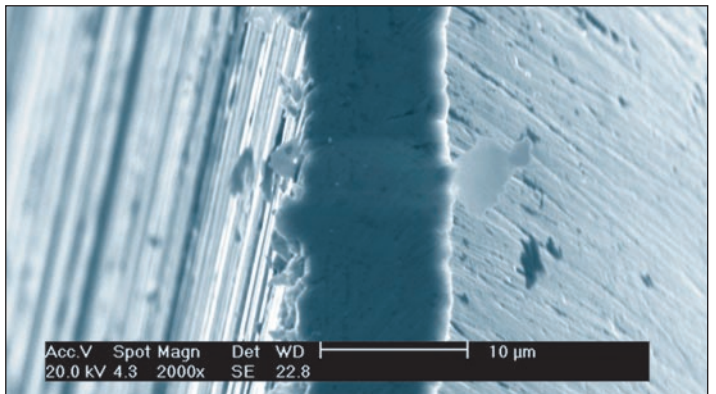
2 If you have forceps or needle holders to remove the blade from its protective foil packet then make sure that you DO NOT grip the blade across the cutting edge.

3 The same is applicable if picking up the blade with forceps or using them to fit the blade to the corresponding surgical handle.

FITTING THE SURGICAL BLADE



AFTER SCUFFING ON METAL TRAY



4 Bringing the cutting edge into contact with any metallic objects or instruments before or during usage, such as scissors, forceps, trays, dishes etc. can have the same detrimental effect on the blade.

The cutting edge may also become damaged during use by contacting with bone, whilst incising granular tissue or by applying excess lateral pressure.

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