

Position statement:

Preventing retention of sheaths, ‘foreign objects’ and ultrasound probe covers following intimate and invasive radiological procedures.

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207 Providence Square
Mill Street, London
SE1 2EW, UK

020 7740 7200
info@sor.org

www.sor.org



Within the NHS there are reports of Never Events ([NHS Resolution, 2021](#)) where ‘foreign objects’ have been retained in patients, post procedure. While these are more common post-surgery, there are reports of retained objects after radiology investigations ([NHS Improvement, 2018](#)). Retained objects can lead to unnecessary post-procedure complications and infection.

The Society of Radiographers recommend that risk assessment is undertaken and clear processes are in place for the removal and checking of items used during interventional procedures and intimate examinations. Education of all staff involved in the procedure is an important element of reducing risk of retained objects.

National Safety Standards for Invasive Procedures ([NatSSIPs 2](#)) procedures should be followed by all radiology departments and services such as ultrasound which sit outside of the radiology/imaging service, such as maternity, fertility and gynaecology departments ([CPOC, 2023](#)). “The prevention of retained foreign objects is a shared responsibility and the risk of occurrence is reduced through education, effective teamwork and processes.” ([CPOC, 2023](#)).

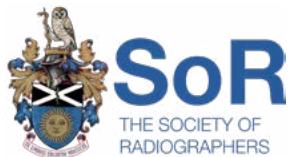
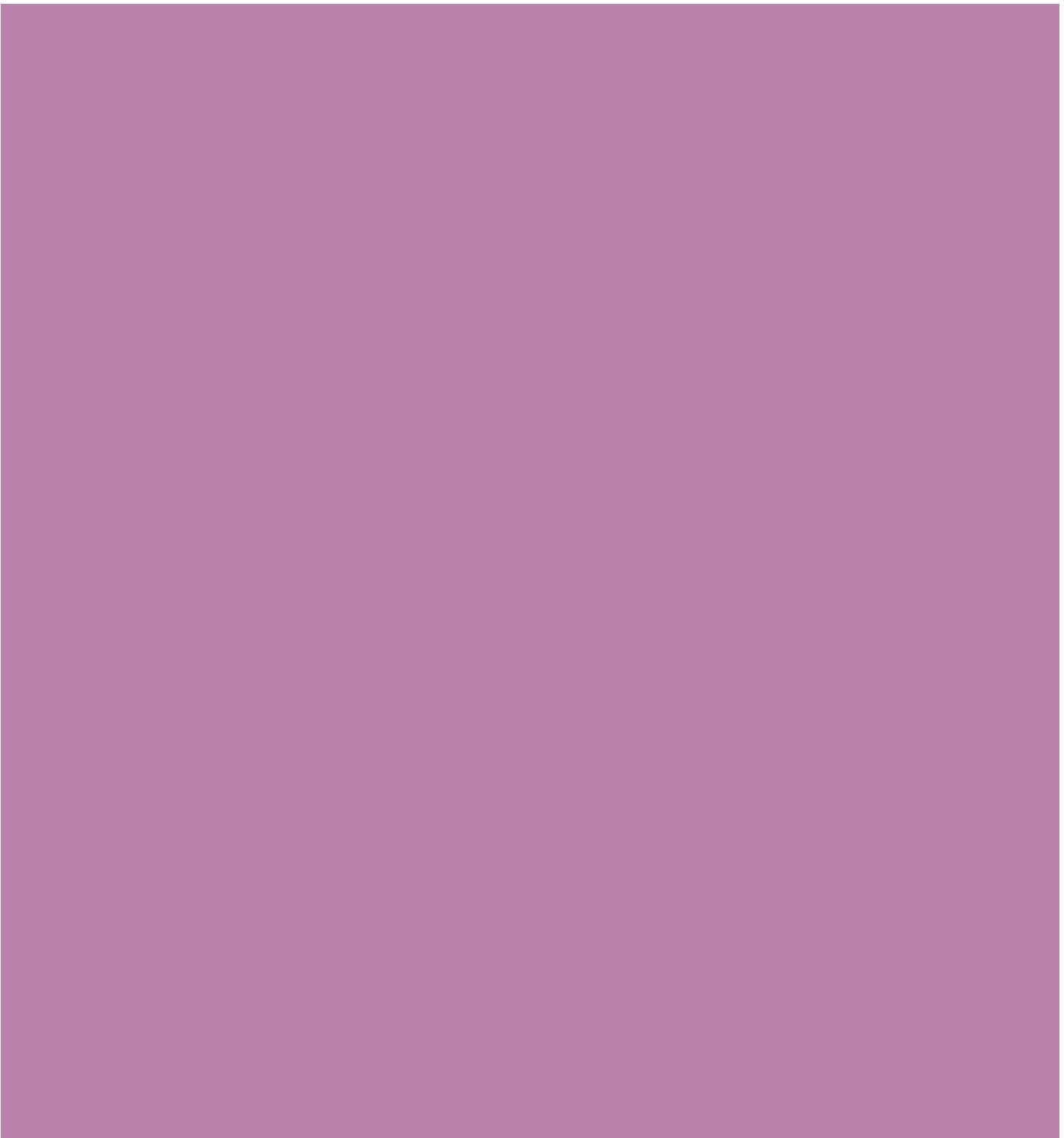
Ultrasound probe cover removal

For endovaginal and endorectal ultrasound examinations, where a probe cover is used it is good practice to:

1. Use gloved hands to cover the decontaminated probe prior to the examination
2. Remove the probe with the gloved hand at the end of the examination and ensuring that the probe cover is still in place
3. Immediately take the probe cover off and hold it in the palm of the gloved hand
4. Visually look at the probe cover to check integrity and that no fragments could be retained
5. Remove the glove by turning it inside out, with the enclosed probe cover inside
6. Dispose of the glove which contains the used probe cover in the appropriate waste bin
7. Decontaminate the ultrasound probe using the appropriate method ([AXREM, BMUS and SoR, 2020](#))
8. Recommend that patients wash with soap and water when they return home or to the ward

References:

- AXREM, BMUS and SoR (2020) [Ultrasound Transducer Decontamination – Best Practice Summary](#)
- AXREM, BMUS and SoR (2020) [Transducer Decontamination - Best Practice Summary Poster](#)
- Centre for Perioperative Care (2023) [National Safety Standards for Invasive Procedures 2 \(NatSSIPs\)](#)
- NHS Improvement (2018) Never Events list 2018. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2018-Never-Events-List-updated-February-2021.pdf>
- NHS Resolution Did you know? Retained foreign object post procedure <https://resolution.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Retained-foreign-object-post-procedure-Did-you-know-leaflet.pdf>



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