

# JAM SESSION 7: Expiration Dates Matter – So Do Events

What really determines whether a sterile item is safe to use?

Let's clear up a common misconception.

Sterile supplies don't become unsafe just because time passes—but they *do* become unsafe if something happens to them.

That's where **event-related shelf life** comes in.

At the same time, **manufacturer expiration dates are non-negotiable** and follow a different rule set.

Understanding the difference helps keep our patients safe and keeps us compliant.

## What Is Event-Related Shelf Life?

Event-related shelf life means that a properly sterilized item remains sterile **unless an event occurs** that compromises the packaging or barrier system.

**Event-related shelf life applies to all sterile items**, regardless of where they were sterilized.

Sterility is lost when an event occurs:

- Packaging is torn, punctured, wet, or crushed
- Seal is broken or compromised
- Item is dropped or mishandled
- Improper storage conditions
- Evidence of contamination or moisture

Expiration dates still matter:

- Manufacturer expiration dates **cannot be extended internally**.
- Infection Control and Compliance **do not have the authority** to change manufacturer expiration dates.
- **Only the manufacturer**, in writing, can approve any extension.
- Verbal approvals or internal decisions are **not acceptable**.
- **If it's expired – discard it**

Manufacturer-Sterile, Single-Use Items:

- Manufacturer-sterile, single-use items **cannot be re-sterilized**.
- These items are **not validated for reprocessing**
- If expired or compromised - discard

**Access a short video here:**



<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dDJ8DAIZLwi8mCQak4CTXguqFMMez0rX/view?usp=sharing>

**Key Takeaway:**

**It's not only the expiration date – it's the event. Both rules matter, and neither can be ignored.**