



## Surgical Site Marking

### Making a Better Mark

Removal of the surgical site marking during the scrub and prep phase is always a concern, since it is a requirement that the mark remain visible at the start of the actual surgery. The following actions (particularly the first) can go a long way towards improving the durability of the skin marking:

#### **1. De-Grease the Skin First.**

Permanent markers, which are not approved for direct use on human skin,\* contain solvent-based inks that cut through the natural oils on the skin and allow more ink to get to the epidermis. Utilize the same principle by de-greasing the skin with an alcohol swab prior to making the mark with an approved gentian violet skin marker.

#### **2. Mark Early in the Preoperative Process.**

In general, the longer the ink is in contact with the skin, the deeper it will penetrate into the epidermis, and the better it will stand up to a vigorous prep. If the universal 'YES' marking system is being used, the patient can be given an OP Stamp to mark themselves on the evening prior to surgery. Such a mark will stand up to even the most vigorous of skin preps.

#### **3. Scrub Deliberately Over the Marked Area.**

During the scrubbing process, apply lighter, slower strokes over the marked area to minimize mechanical abrasion of the mark itself.

\* Permanent markers are ASTM D-4236 approved for use as art materials ONLY. Medico-legally, these markers are not approved for direct use on human skin. Solvent-based permanent inks have been shown to produce inflammatory skin changes and can potentially be blamed for any wound complication that occurs. All skin markings should be made with water-based, FDA-approved inks (of which gentian violet is the most common).