

TIPS FROM OUR READERS

## Fabricating a low-cost autoclavable throat screen from a steamer mat

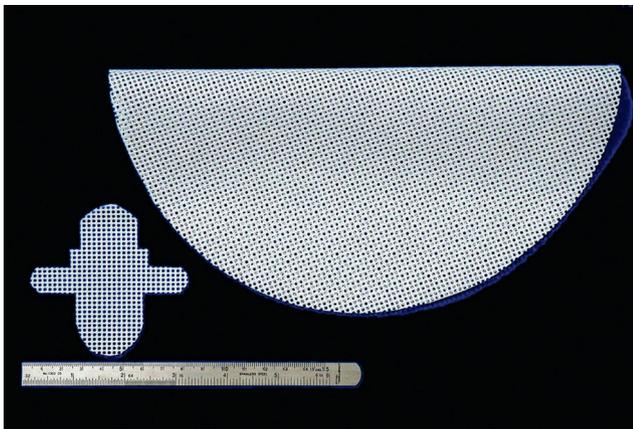


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The dental literature is full of reports of aspirated restorations and instruments.<sup>1-6</sup> Not all instruments or restorations can be secured to prevent this. It is in this context that the use of a cotton gauze throat screen,<sup>4-6</sup> a simple double square of cotton gauze, is advocated to block the throat, thus preventing aspiration or swallowing. Unfortunately, the main reason most practitioners do not use such a throat screen is that cotton gauze is flimsy and unwieldy especially once wet.

This article proposes the use of a silicone steamer mesh mat (a nonstick dumpling mat) instead of cotton gauze. Steamer mesh mats are sold for use as liners

inside bamboo steamers that are used to cook dumplings and are readily available for approximately \$2 per mat from online retailers such as eBay and Amazon under various brand names. A single round steamer mat can yield at least 4 throat screens, making each reusable and autoclavable (made of silicone rubber) throat screen a 50-cent investment toward clinical safety. The silicone throat screen is cut out with an arched shaped for the palate and 3 extensions for the cheeks and tongue. The overall mesh size required is 8×8 cm (Fig. 1). Mock retrieval of a bur from the author's mouth is pictured, illustrating the use of the throat screen (Fig. 2).



**Figure 1.** Throat screen design to left (pictured above 6-inch ruler) cut out from silicone steamer mat, as pictured to right.



**Figure 2.** Mock retrieval of bur caught on throat screen placed in author's mouth for illustration of placement and use of throat screen.

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