



Sharps Injury Prevention

Contaminated needles, scalpels, broken glass and other sharps are prevalent hazards for healthcare workers. Injuries from contact with sharps may lead to serious and fatal infections from bloodborne pathogens. Start preventing injuries by identifying the highest-risk procedures or devices and implementing the most effective engineering and work practice controls.

Work Without Needles

- Administer medications through a route other than injection (e.g., tablets, inhalers, transdermal patches and jet injectors).
- Use needleless intravenous (IV) systems.
- Eliminate unnecessary sharps like towel clips.

Engineering and Administrative Controls

- Whenever possible, engineering controls should be the primary method to reduce exposure to bloodborne pathogens.
- Use sharps devices that have safety features such as needles that retract, sheathe or blunt immediately after use. Know how to use these safety features.
- Develop policies aimed to limit exposure to needlestick hazards and allocate resources to implement them:
 - Implement a needlestick prevention committee.
 - Develop and maintain an exposure control plan.
 - Remove all unsafe devices.
 - Provide consistent training on the use of safe devices.
 - Ensure that sharps disposals are readily available and always being used.

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Work Practice Controls

- Do not bend or break needles.
- Participate in your employer's bloodborne pathogen training program.
- Help choose the best needlestick devices for work tasks. Make it a priority to use the safety features of the devices selected.
- Report all hazards from needles that you observe in your work environment.

Before a Procedure

- Organize equipment.
- Ensure adequate lighting.
- Keep sharps pointed away from the user.
- Ensure a sharps disposal container is available.

During a Procedure

- Maintain visual contact with sharps.
- Be aware of other people around you (e.g., patients, co-workers).
- Control the location of sharps to avoid injury. Designate a neutral zone for placing and retrieving them.
- Alert others when you are passing sharps. Do not pass unsheathed needles.
- Activate the safety feature of devices as soon as the procedure is completed.

Safe Disposal

- Use appropriate sharps disposal containers immediately after use.
- Sharps containers must be easily accessible and located near all workers using needles. Wholly disposable containers are preferred.
- Keep all sharps disposal containers upright.
- Keep hands behind sharps during disposal.
- Never put hands or fingers into sharps containers.
- Visually inspect sharps containers for overfilling. Replace containers before they become overfilled.

Needlestick Prevention Committee

- The needlestick prevention committee should be a multi-disciplinary team that meets regularly.
- Develop, implement and evaluate a "needlestick prevention plan."
- Review the list of recorded needlestick injuries to determine where the highest number occur and the procedures that generate the highest number of needlesticks.
- Determine if safe and effective alternatives to needle-bearing devices are available.
- Oversee the exposure control plan which includes the post-exposure follow-up.
- Obtain information and provide training on new safety devices as they develop.



Recording Injuries

Record all needlestick injuries on a sharps injury log. Minimally, this log should identify the following items:

- Date and time of the incident
- Type and brand of the device involved in the injury
- Where the employee was working when the incident occurred
- A description of how the incident occurred

In the Event of a Sharps Injury or Exposure to Blood or Other Body Fluid

- Wash needlesticks and cuts with soap and water.
- Flush splashes to the nose, mouth or skin with water.
- Irrigate eyes with clean water, saline or sterile irrigants.
- Report the incident to your supervisor.
- Immediately seek medical treatment.

Additional Resources

- Centers for Disease Control - [Preventing Needlesticks and Sharps Injuries](#)
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration - [Bloodborne Pathogens and Needlestick Prevention](#)
- Centers for Disease Control - Home Health Care Workers How to Prevent Needlestick and Sharps Injuries
- The World Health Organization - [Needlestick Prevention Guide](#)

