



Handling Sharps

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What is a Sharp?

Sharps that can cause injury and expose workers to dangerous pathogens include:

Hypodermic Needles

- Blood collection needles
- Intravenous Needles
- Stylets and line needles
- Butterfly needles
- Allergy or acupuncture needles
- Scalpel blades
- Lancets
- Razor blades
- Glass pipettes

- Scissors
- Metal wire
- Retractors
- Clamps
- Pins
- Staples
- Towel clips
- Bone cutters
- Glass specimen tubes
- Glass capillary tubes



Adapted from Health Care Health & Safety Association of Ontario



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Who's at Risk

Health and community care workers that are at risk for sharps injuries include:

Nurses

Doctors

Dentists & dental hygienists

Personal support workers

Health care aides

Central Supply Workers

Front line workers

Community care workers

Laundry workers

Maintenance workers

Food service workers

Housekeepers

Environmental services workers

Adapted from Health Care Health & Safety Association of Ontario



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Who's at Risk

Activities that put these workers at risk of a sharps injury include:

Client Injections

Intravenous Insertion

Blood Collection

Operative or treatment procedure

Instruments

Specimen Manipulation

Cleaning & Housekeeping

Garbage Removal

Linen Collection & Cleaning

ADLs assisting

Recycling Removal

Client Needle Exchange

Brush Removal

Adapted from Health Care Health & Safety Association of Ontario



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Risk Factor Contributors

- Unsafe work practices
- Recapping needles
- Overfilled sharps containers
- Sharps containers not available
- Lack of job training
- Lack of accountability for unsafe actions
- Improper disposal units

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Risk of Infection

Transmission of blood – borne pathogens such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV can occur, but incidence are rare from a unknown source.

Seroconversion Rates (known + Sources)

Hep B 6-30%

Hep C 3-10%

HIV 0.23%

***Others pathogens: TB, herpes, malaria and syphilis
– even more rare***

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Risk of Infection Depends On...

- Type of body substance involved (ex. Blood)
- Route of exposure (direct Blood to Blood??)
- Volume of body substance involved
- Severity of exposure
- Pathogen Involved
- Amount of pathogen present
- Environmental Conditions
- Immune status of the worker
- Post – exposure treatment

Adapted from Health Care Health & Safety Association of Ontario



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Hepatitis B

- Most common type of hepatitis
- Spread by direct blood to blood contact (sharing needles, sex)
- Many people who get infected, clear the virus on their own and are then protected for life
- The rest become chronically infected which can lead to chronic liver disease (cancer, cirrhosis)
- Vaccine preventable (3 immunizations = life long immunity)



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Hep B Vaccine Recommendations

Eligible for Publicly Funded Vaccine

- History of STI's
- IV Drug Use
- Liver Disease including Hep C
- Men who have sex with men
- Multiple sex partners
- Needle Stick Injury

Not Eligible (Pay for Vaccine)

- Travelling
- Occupation Risk
- Health Care Providers
- First Responders
- Group Home Workers



Hepatitis C

- Transmitted through direct blood to blood contact
- Most people who have it do not know they do
- 20% of people who are infected clear it on their own, but can be re-infected.
- Leads to chronic liver disease but can take many years for this to happen
- No vaccine available to prevent
- Treatment available with upwards of 95% cure rates



HIV

- Virus that attacks your immune system
- Opens the person up to many infections
- Eventually HIV infection becomes AIDS
- It is now classified as a chronic illness
- No cure
- No vaccine
- Life expectancy is almost the same as someone who does not have HIV.



Disposal of Sharps

DO'S

- Use PPE
- Secure container lid
- Prepare for disposal
- Keep containers close by
- Participate in training
- Report unsafe environments or practices

DON'Ts

- Handle sharps
- Force sharps into containers
- Fill containers more than $\frac{3}{4}$ full
- Empty containers
- Recap needles
- Use hands or feet to compact garbage

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What is PPE?

- Equipment require to protect you from injuries

Recommended PPE for handling needles:

- Puncture Proof Gloves
- Heavy duty tongs
- Close toed foot wear
- Biohazard containers



What do I do if I find a needle?

- Assemble required Equipment
- Make sure your container is within arms reach of where you are working
- Place the container on the ground or stable surface
- Put on your puncture proof gloves
- Pick up the needle using the tongs only
- Hold the needle facing away from you
- Never force needles into a biohazard container
- Only fill containers 3/4 full

WASH YOUR HANDS!



Never Ever.....

- Pick up sharps with your hands
- Never try to recap a needle
- Never pick up more than one sharp at a time
- Never dispose of sharps in the garbage or recycling
- Never flush sharps down the toilet
- Never fill containers more than $\frac{3}{4}$ full



What if I accidentally stick myself with a sharp?

- Allow the wound to bleed freely
- Cleanse the wound thoroughly with soap and water
- Disinfect the wound (i.e., alcohol swab)
- Cover with a sterile bandage
- Do not delay – seek medical attention immediately

Follow your organizations policy (i.e., Report your injury)

Questions?

Moving Forward

- Develop policies and guidelines for handling sharps
- Attain PPE
- Attain sharps containers



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