



Sharps Safety Policy

Approved By	Rachel England-Frost
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Sharps include needles, scalpels, stitch cutters, glass ampoules, bone fragments and any sharp instrument. The main hazards of a sharps injury are blood borne viruses such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV. It is not uncommon for staff to be injured by the unsafe or poor practice of others, but sharps injuries are preventable and learning following incidents should be put in place to avoid repeat accidents.

When do accidents occur?

According to data from the Health Protection Agency (HPA 2012) and from the USA (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention 2010) sharps injuries occur:

- During use
- After use, before disposal
- Between steps in procedure
- During disposal
- While resheathing or recapping a needle

Some procedures have a higher than average risk of causing a sharps injury. These include intra-vascular (IV) cannulation and venepuncture. **Devices involved in high risk procedures are:**

- IV cannulae
- Winged steel needles (known as butterfly needles)
- Hypodermic needles and syringes
- Phlebotomy needles

To reduce the risk of injury and exposure to blood borne viruses, it is vital that sharps are used safely and disposed of carefully as detailed below.

Safe Use and Disposal of Sharps

- Gloves must be worn
- Sharps must not be passed directly from hand to hand and handling should be kept to a minimum.
- Needles must not be recapped, bent, broken or disassembled before use or disposal.
- Used sharps must be discarded into the appropriate sharps container immediately by the person generating the sharps waste.

Sharps Containers:

- Must **be located** in a safe position that avoids spillage, at a height that allows the safe disposal of sharps, away from public access areas and out of the reach of children

- Must **not be** used for any other purpose than the disposal of sharps
- Must **not be** filled above the fill line
- Must **be** disposed of when the fill line is reached
- Should **be** disposed of every 3 months even if not full

In the Event of a Sharps Injury

First Aid

- Encourage the wound to bleed
- Do not suck or rub the wound
- Wash the area thoroughly with soap and warm running water
- Cover the injury with a waterproof dressing

Any sharps injuries should be reported to the Managers or Partners and Occupational Health. Occupational Health will advise on how to proceed and organise any required blood tests or vaccinations.

Details of the injury should be recorded including who was injured, and when and where the incident occurred. If possible, the summary record should contain sufficient detail to identify what type of sharp was involved, at what stage of a procedure or post-procedure/disposal of the sharp the injury occurred, and the severity of the injury.