

Medical - Health Care In-Service Training Series Sharps Handling Safety

What can happen? Sharps carry a risk of injury because they could cut or pierce the skin and transmit a pathogen that can cause serious infection. “Sharps” is a general term used for all types of instruments that have points or sharp edges capable of puncturing or cutting the skin. In the health care setting, exposures to sharps commonly occur from:



- Needles
- Razor blades
- Scalpel blades
- Broken glass
- Lancets

A sharps container is used for disposal of used needles and syringes. Using a sharps container for collection and disposal will aid in the prevention of injury from accidental contact. Characteristics of a well-designed sharps container are: non-breakable, leak proof, impervious to moisture, rigid, tightly lidded, puncture resistant, red in color and labeled with the universal biohazard symbol.

Always use Universal Precaution protocols and assume that all “sharps” are contaminated.

Follow these safety tips when working with sharps and sharps containers:

ALWAYS

- Discard contaminated sharps immediately into a sharps container.
- Drop needles into the container without touching the outside of the container.
- Work with one uncapped needle at a time, keeping other sharps in view at all times.
- Avoid handling broken glassware by hand. Use tongs, forceps or another device to indirectly retrieve the broken glass.
- Designate a container specifically for collection of broken glass.

STOP! THINK!

DO NOT fill sharps containers more than $\frac{3}{4}$ full.

DO NOT force sharps into a container or attempt to retrieve a sharp from a container.

DO NOT bend, break, shear or remove needles from syringes.

DO NOT recap needles.

DO NOT place a needle cap in your mouth in order to remove the cap.

DO NOT leave sharps on an injection tray or accessible to others. Keep the sharps in view at all times.

DO NOT pass sharps from hand to hand. Instead, put it down and let the other person pick up the device.