

Preventing Sharps Injuries

For Sharps with a Safety Device:

- Always use safety needles/devices if they are available
- Properly activate the safety mechanism – listen for the “click” and promptly dispose of the needle even after the safety is activated
- Pay attention while activating the safety device. Employee Health has recently completed several cases where staff have been injured while activating the safety or thought it was fully engaged, but wasn't
- Do not recap any device without a safety

Sharps Disposal:

- Plan for safe handling & disposal prior to starting any procedure involving sharps (if unable to dispose of sharps right away, they should be placed in a designated area to be retrieved/ disposed of by the user)
- Dispose of used sharps promptly in appropriate sharps container; have sharps container within arms reach & at eye level
- Do not dispose of sharp in a sharps container that you cannot see the top of
- Do not dispose of a sharp in a filled sharps containers (avoid overfilling - sharps containers must be replaced when they are $\frac{3}{4}$ full and/or the fill line is reached)
- Pay attention when discarding the needle – watch the point of the needle until you have disposed of it
- If sharp is reusable, determine in advance where it will be placed for safe handling after use

Environment/General:

- Think about others! Never leave a sharp on a tray, an incontinent pad or anywhere else where someone else could come into contact with it
- If you find an improperly disposed sharp, do not pick it up with your hands; use other device to do so & discard
- If disposing of a sharp with attached tubing, be aware that tubing can recoil and cause injury with needle (some IV devices or needles with tubing attached, guide wires, or other devices that are longer than regular needles may require a deeper sharps container to minimize flip-back)
- Avoid bringing hands close to the top of the sharps container and never place hands or fingers into container to facilitate disposal

- Ensure work area has adequate lighting & space to perform procedure
- When handling a sharp be aware of other staff in the immediate environment to avoid injury to yourself and others
- Never hand pass exposed sharps from one person to another; if it must be passed, place on a tray
- Handle all patient clothing, personal items, and linen with care-they may contain hidden or unprotected sharps.
- Report all exposures immediately to ensure appropriate follow-up care (e.g.. post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) should be started within 2 hours of exposure for high risk cases)
- Report anything that is unsafe, including the use of non-safety devices if safety option is available by calling SAFE line
- Use appropriate PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) and at all times
- Know your Hepatitis B immune status (please note that completion of the immunization series does not guarantee immunity); if unsure of status, contact Occupational Health to arrange testing
- Explain procedure to patient to gain cooperation and avoid potential movement during the procedure
- Ask for assistance with patients that may be uncooperative
- Limit interruptions during procedures