**Section 3.6: Safety Procedures**

**What are Sharps?**

"Sharps" include needles, as well as items such as scalpels, lancets, razor blade, scissors, metal wire, retractors, clamps, pins, staples, cutters, and glass items. Essentially, any object that is able to cut the skin can be considered a "sharp". <https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/diseases/needlestick_injuries.html>

The main risk to workers who have a needlestick/sharps injury is exposure to viruses such as hepatitis B and C, and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

* Hepatitis B is an illness that affects the liver. It causes liver inflammation, vomiting, and jaundice. Over the long term, it can cause scarring of the liver and liver cancer. It can eventually lead to death.
* Hepatitis C also affects the liver and can cause fever, loss of appetite, fatigue, and jaundice. Over longer periods of time, it causes scar tissue and liver failure. Some people may have no symptoms for many years but can still infect others.
* HIV is a virus that attacks the immune system, causing infection. When the body can’t fight infections anymore, the disease becomes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)

**Purpose:**

To emphasize the correct handling of all sharps, to minimize the risk of injury and/or contamination, decrease potential hazards and to increase the awareness of safe work practices related to various types of sharps. Also, to promote and support the health and safety of all employees.

**Precautions:**

* All needles and sharps shall be handled and disposed of in a manner that will not endanger the health and safety of worker or others.
* It is the responsibility of the worker to ensure appropriate handling and safe disposal of the sharps/needle.
* Needles will not be recapped, bent or removed or otherwise manipulated by hand.
* Discard needles and syringes immediately after use to the appropriate sharps container.
* Never discard sharps/needles into bags of regular trash.
* Uncapped needles or other medical sharps must not be left unattended or covered with a towel, blanket, etc.
* All used needles, syringes, blood lancets, etc. are to be placed/dropped directly into a labeled designated ‘”Sharps” container.
* This container must be labeled “bio-hazardous materials” and the container must be large enough to hold several used sharps.
* The sharps container is located in the (site specific).
* The sharps disposal container is checked regularly to ensure it is not filled beyond capacity and a replacement container is readily available.
* Full sharps containers are disposed of at the designated pharmacy.
* All needles and medical sharps shall be disposed of properly in appropriate sharps containers by the person who used the device.
* All sharps/needle injuries must be immediately reported to the Supervisor or designate. Medical attention will be sought as appropriate for such injuries.

**Procedure for Sharps/Needlestick Injury:**

1. Immediately squeeze the injured area to promote bleeding.
2. Treat the wound using First Aid measures and then seek medical attention.
3. Report the incident immediately to your Supervisor or designate.
4. Complete the Employee Incident Report Form.
5. Submit completed form to supervisor.

**Disposal Procedure:**

* You may recap your own needle after use to reduce the chance of someone else being injured by your needle. Never recap a needle that someone else has used for an injection.
* A needle clip can be used to remove the needle from your used syringe.
* The syringe cannot be used again and the “sharp” needle is stored safely inside the needle clip. Needle clips are available through your diabetes educator or pharmacist.
* A needle remover can be used to safely remove a used needle from an insulin pen and prevent injury. Needle removers are available through your diabetes educator or pharmacist.
* All sharps should be put into special sharps disposal containers for disposal. The containers are available at your pharmacy, often free with the purchase of other supplies. These containers protect others from injury and often disinfect the sharps as well.
* Place all used lancets, pen needles, syringes, and infusion sets into the container right after use. Do not leave them lying on surfaces such as beds or tables.
* Once full, follow the instructions on your container. Many pharmacies collect and safely dispose of a full sharps container for you if you turn it to the store. If your pharmacy does not offer this service check with your municipal government to see what is available where you live.