



HOMES AND SENIORS SERVICES

POLICY & PROCEDURE NUMBER: 2.12

DEPARTMENT: *Infection Control*

SUBJECT: *Handling Sharps*

APPROVAL DATE:

REVISION DATE: March 2016

REVIEW DATE: March 2017

REVIEW DATE: November 2018

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DEFINITION:

Sharps shall include all needles, scalpel blades, glass, and any other item capable of causing a cut or puncture at task.

PREAMBLE:

According to the Ontario Health Care Health and Safety Committee, safety-engineered medical sharps (SEMS) are sharp pointed or bladed medical devices or instruments that include safety features to help protect workers from injury. Under legislation, employers and workers share responsibility for safe handling of sharps. Specifically, OHSA Section 28 (2) states:

No worker shall,

- a) Remove or make ineffective any protective device required by the regulations or by his or her employer, without providing an adequate temporary protective device and when the need for removing or making effective the protective device has ceased, the protective device shall be replaced immediately;
- b) Use or operate any equipment, machine, device, or thing or work in a manner that may endanger himself, herself, or any other worker.

POLICY:

1. The most effective risk control measure is to eliminate use of sharp devices when there are effective alternatives. Managers and front line staffs are expected to perform regular risk assessments of their operation to identify these alternatives.
2. When sharps elimination is not possible, safety engineered devices must be used if available.
3. Staff who use sharp devices are encouraged to be vaccinated against blood-borne pathogens like Hepatitis B.



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4. Staff who use sharps must be provided with appropriate interactive training by their supervisor or designate regarding safe handling and disposal of these devices including the following:
 - Strict adherence to prohibition on re-capping of needles;
 - Ensuring sharps disposal in disposal containers provided by contracted disposal service;
 - Ensuring that sharps containers are not overfilled and they are handled and disposed of properly.
5. Personal protective equipment (i.e. gloves) is not very effective against the prevention of a sharps injury.
6. Refer to policy 4.3 – Employee Sharps Injury or Mucosal Exposure to Blood or Bodily Fluids