



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; Nov. 2018; December 2019; Dec. 2020, January 2022

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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 staff 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, disposal, and injury prevention of these devices including:
 - Strict adherence to prohibition on re-capping of needles;
 - Ensuring sharps disposal in designated puncture-resistant 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.

Before the beginning of a procedure that involves the use of a needle or other sharp device:

- Ensure that equipment necessary for performing a procedure is available within arm's reach.
- Assess the work environment for adequate lighting and space to perform the procedure.
- If multiple sharps will be used during a procedure, organize the work area (e.g. procedure tray) so that the sharp is always pointed away from the operator.
- Identify the location of the sharps disposal container; if moveable, place it as close to the point-of-use as appropriate for immediate disposal of the sharp. If the sharp is reusable, determine in advance where it will be placed for safe handling after use.
- Assess the potential for the patient to be uncooperative, combative, or confused. Obtain assistance from other staff or a family member to assist in calming the patient as necessary.
- Inform the patient of what the procedure involves and explain the importance of avoiding any sudden movement that might dislodge the sharp, for successful completion of the procedure as well as prevention of injury to healthcare personnel.



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Refer to policy 4.3 – Employee Sharps Injury or Mucosal Exposure to Blood or Bodily Fluids

References:

Workbook for Designing, Implementing and Evaluating a Sharps Injury Prevention Program; CDC; 2008.

Routine practices and additional precautions for the transmission of infection in healthcare settings; Public Health Agency of Canada; September 2017