

Sharps are objects that can penetrate the skin. Sharps can include hypodermic needles, syringes (with or without the attached needle), Pasteur pipettes, scalpel blades, blood vials, needles with attached tubing, exposed ends of dental wires, culture dishes, suture needles, slides, cover slips and other broken or unbroken glass that have been in contact with infectious agents or have been used in animal or human patient care or treatment at medical research laboratories. All needle sticks, and other sharps injuries, carry the risk of secondary infections in addition to exposure to the needle's content and/or contamination on the outside of the needle or other sharp object. Two of the most common causes of needle sticks are re-capping needles and improper disposal of needles.

Sharps Injury Prevention

The use of devices sharp enough to puncture the skin must be eliminated whenever possible. Consider the use of safer medical devices including those that are needleless or have built-in protection to guard against contact with the contaminated sharps. Plastic ware should be substituted for glassware. Blunt tipped scissors must be used instead of pointy ones.

To prevent sharps injuries:

- Needles must not be bent, sheared, broken, recapped, removed from disposable syringes, or otherwise manipulated prior to disposal.
- Use extreme caution and be alert when handling sharps. Avoid distractions and keep sight of the needle.
- Ensure that animals are restrained when using needles on animals and be on the alert for any unexpected movements.
- Immediately after use, discard needle and syringe (whether contaminated or not) into puncture resistant sharps containers. **RECAPPING OF NEEDLES IS PROHIBITED.**
- Do not leave unprotected needles on work surfaces.
- Use care and caution when cleaning up after procedures that require the use of syringes and needles.
- Transport needles or syringes in a sealed container.
- Do not pick up broken glass with hands, use mechanical means such as a brush and dustpan, tongs, or forceps.

Sharps Disposal

- Never discard sharps into regular trash.
- Never discard sharps into bags of biological waste
- Promptly dispose of all sharps in sharps container.
- Locate sharps containers within easy reach of work stations where sharps are commonly used.
- Use leak-proof, puncture-resistant sharps containers properly labeled by the supplier.
- Use a size and shape container that will allow the sharp to freely and completely enter the container.
- Never fill containers more than $\frac{3}{4}$ full.
- Close and seal the top of containers.
- Place the sealed sharps container in the red bag lined containers provided for pick up and disposal.

Accidental Needle Stick or sharps injury

If a needle stick injury should occur, wash the puncture area with soap and water, report the incident to the supervisor and laboratory director, and seek medical attention as soon as possible. **Any needle stick with recombinant DNA and/or an infectious agent must be reported to the Office of the Environmental Health and Safety as soon as possible.**

Needle Recapping

Although recapping needles is not recommended in the lab, there are times in which it must be done. In the event that needles must be filled in advance of their use, there are safe methods that can be used to "recap" them using one hand. Here are two suggestions for doing this in a safe manner:

Needle Recapping Instructions:

1. One-Handed Scoop Method

Step 1: Place the cap on the desk or other flat surface with something firm to "push" the needle cap against.

Step 2: Holding the syringe with needle attached in one hand, slip the needle into the cap without using the other hand.

Step 3: Push the capped needle against a firm object to "seat" the cap onto the needle firmly using only one hand.

2. Needle Recapping Devices

These are devices with a hole in the center that hold needle caps and allow for single hand uncapping and recapping.