



# Avoid Sharps-Related Injuries

Needlesticks and other sharps-related injuries are a serious problem in health care. There are approximately 385,000 of these injuries to hospital-based personnel each year, with more occurring in other health care settings. Sharps-related injuries are especially worrisome because they can expose workers to bloodborne infections. Improper handling and storage of sharps are common causes of injuries. Here are tips to prevent needlesticks and other sharps-related injuries in your workplace.

## TIPS FOR AVOIDING SHARPS-RELATED INJURIES

### [ ✓ ] Use safety sharps whenever possible.

- » These devices have built-in protections to guard workers from contact with a contaminated sharp.
- » Be sure you understand how to use protection mechanisms and use them every time.

- » Instead, use one-handed “scoop” technique in which the needle is used to pick up the cap, and then the cap is pushed against a hard surface to ensure a tight fit onto the device.
- » Also, the cap may be held with tongs or forceps and placed over the needle.

### [ ✓ ] Always dispose of used sharps promptly and always use sharps disposal containers.

- » Locate sharps disposal containers near site of procedure to allow for easy, prompt disposal.

### [ ✓ ] Avoid recapping, bending or removing needles from sharps device when possible.

### [ ✓ ] If recapping, bending or removing needles is necessary, use mechanical device or one-handed technique to do so.

- » Cap must not be held in one hand while guiding sharp into it with the other.



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[ ✓ ] **Contaminated broken glass must not be picked up by hand. Instead, clean up using brush and dustpan, tongs, or forceps.**

[ ✓ ] **When using sharps device in a procedure:**

- » Organize equipment at point of use
- » Use adequate lighting
- » Keep sharps pointed away from user
- » Assess patient's ability to cooperate and get help if necessary
- » Ask patient to avoid sudden movement
- » Keep sharps visible and avoid distractions
- » Never hand off or leave sharps for others to dispose

» Loudly state “sharps” when handling sharps

» Maintain a safe zone around sharps being used

[ ✓ ] **During cleanup:**

» Use hemostat/forceps when checking trays, waste materials and bedding for exposed sharps

» Never put hands, fingers into sharps container

» Visually inspect sharps container for overfilling

» Replace containers when no more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  full

## TEAM ACTIVITIES

Here are some activities for your team to assess and minimize risks associated with use of sharps.



Discuss sharps safety procedures at a team huddle.



Also use huddles to identify potential issues, such as location and/or inadequate supply of sharps safety containers.



Perform safety observations when team members use sharps devices, to help your team emphasize safe practices and minimize injury risks.

## SMARTIE GOAL

Set a team SMART goal that focuses on increasing safety in use and disposal of sharps devices.

Make this goal a SMARTIE goal by emphasizing inclusion and equity.

Here's a possible SMART goal:

*“We will decrease the number of sharps improperly disposed from 2 to 0 by September 1, 2024.”*

**Inclusive:** We will ensure all staff, am/pm shift, is aware of the goal to reduce the number of sharps improperly disposed of.

**Equitable:** Sharing this best practice with other departments will ensure sharps are properly disposed of.