

Guidance at a Glance – Sharps Management

These guidelines support the delivery of care in community and social care settings. This guidance reflects best practice/national guidelines.

KEY POINTS

'Sharps' are items that can cause cuts and puncture wounds, including needles and sharp instruments. It's your responsibility to dispose of sharps safely into a sharps container when you have used them. Even if you don't use sharps in your role, you still need to be aware of good practice.

Good practice to prevent needle stick/sharps injuries

- Always use an injection tray with an integral sharps container and dispose of the sharps at the point of use to reduce the risk of injuries whilst carrying sharps.
- Never recap used needles due to the high risk of injury.
- Always dispose of the needle and syringe as one unit into the sharps container. Never attempt to remove the needle from the syringe.
- Sharps should be disposed of at source by the person using them. Passing used sharps from person-to-person increases the risk of injury

- Select the correct colour-coded sharps container. Ensure it is the correct size
- Containers must be assembled correctly as per the manufacturer's instructions, ensuring the lid is snapped firmly in place all around the rim.
- For traceability purposes, when assembled, the label on the container must be dated and signed and must have practice/care home address clearly visible.
- Containers must be placed in a safe position that avoids spillages, and at a height that allows the safe disposal of sharps. Containers should NEVER be placed on the floor.
- Replace the lid opening to the temporary closed position after use to prevent the risk of spillage.
- Containers must not be filled above the fill line as this could result in sharps protruding out of the opening.
- Containers must be disposed of when the full line is reached. The fill line is clearly marked on the container and is usually $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up, never full to the top. Ensure the container is locked, and then dated and signed. Write the location on the label. Containers awaiting disposal should be stored in a secure location.
- Containers should be disposed of every 3 months even if not full, in line with local policy.

SHARPS CONTAINERS

SHARPS INJURY

- Encourage the wound to bleed by squeezing under running water (never suck the wound).
- Wash the wound with liquid soap and warm water then dry.
- Cover the wound with a waterproof dressing.
- Report the injury to your manager immediately.
- Immediately contact your GP or occupation health department. Out of normal office hours, attend an Accident and Emergency (A&E) department.
- If your injury is from a needle stick/sharp which has been used on a service user (source), the doctor in charge of their care may take a blood sample from the service user to test for Hepatitis B, C and HIV (following counselling and agreement of the service user).

- Health and Safety Executive (2013) Health and Safety (Sharp Instruments in Healthcare) Regulations 2013 available from: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hsis7.htm [accessed on 30.08.19]
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2017) healthcare associated infections: prevention and control in primary and community care. Available from: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG139/chapter/1-Guidance> [accessed on 30.08.19]