

Title	SAFE MANAGEMENT AND DISPOSAL OF SHARPS			Number	CL39
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Introduction

Needlestick and injury from a sharp object can occur in clinical and non-clinical settings. They are avoidable when good practice and procedure are employed during the handling and disposal of sharps.

For the management of sharps' injuries refer to the Operational Procedure 'CL38 – Contamination – Sharps or Splash Injuries'.

Definitions

Sharps – any object that has an edge or point that could penetrate, puncture or lacerate skin. This includes needles, broken glass, surgical instruments and scalpels. Sharps can be clean or contaminated with blood or body fluid.

Sharps injury – when sharps penetrate the skin.

Needlestick injury – where the sharps injury is caused by hollow bore or solid needle.

Hollow bore needle – needle with a lumen and bevelled edge used for collecting blood, or for the administration of parenteral substances. This includes peripheral cannula, butterfly, injection needles, and venepuncture needles. Hollow-bore needles carry a larger volume of blood than needles without a lumen (e.g. suture needles) therefore there is greater risk of blood borne virus transfer.

Sharps bin – approved container with specific coloured lid used for safe disposal of sharps. Bins must conform to British Standard: BS 7320 (1990).

The three types of exposure with significant risks in healthcare settings are: percutaneous injury (e.g. from needles, instruments and human bites, exposure of broken skin (e.g. abrasions and cuts) and exposure of mucous membranes, including the eye, mouth and

gums. Sharps injuries pose a real risk to health, particularly from bloodborne virus (BBV) transmission, such as Hepatitis B/C and HIV.

All Staff

As professionals, staff are personally accountable for actions and omissions in their practice and must always be able to justify their decisions as set out in the relevant codes of conduct

All staff have a responsibility to:

- Familiarise themselves with the guidance regarding the management and safe use of sharps.
- Adhere to safe working practices in order not to harm either themselves or others.
- Attend mandatory infection prevention and control training
- Be aware of the necessary action to take in the event of a sharps injury, body fluid splashes or spillages, as outlined in the Operational Procedure CL38 'Contamination – Sharps or Splash Injuries'.

All non-clinical staff are required to have an awareness of this procedure and how it affects them as staff within a clinical organisation.

Sharps Bin

The following procedure must be adopted with regards to the use of containers provided for the disposal of used needles and other sharp objects.

- Must be taken to patient, where possible, when using sharps.
- Must be easily available in all areas where clinical sharps are used but must not be accessible by children.
- Must be assembled correctly and checked to ensure all connections are solid.
- **MUST NOT** be overfilled - dispose of sharps bins when $\frac{3}{4}$ full. Lock aperture securely before disposal.
- Must be made secure prior to placing for collection and must not be left where there may be access by children.
- Dispose of as clinical waste. Do not place in a clinical waste bag.

If any sharps are protruding through the container or opening, **DO NOT** attempt to remedy the situation by pushing the items inside.

If a container has been overfilled, **DO NOT** decant any of the contents. If possible, place inside a larger sharps container and arrange for disposal.

An incident form should be completed as a 'near miss'.

Sharps in use

The following should be taken into consideration when sharp instruments or objects, including needles, are in use:

- **DO NOT** separate needles from syringe routinely. Blood contaminated syringes together with needle should be placed in the sharps containers.
- Always dispose of sharps into a sharps bin at the point of use.
- Always get help when using sharps with a confused or agitated patient.
- Always close the temporary sliding closure of the sharps bin following sharps disposal.

