

INFORMATION SHEET

Sharps Injuries Safety

'Sharps' are needles, blades (such as scalpels) and other medical instruments that are used to pierce, prick or cut the skin.

A sharps injury is an incident which causes one of these items to penetrate or cut the skin. These can also lead to potential infections or the transmission of blood borne viruses such as hepatitis or HIV.

Sharps injuries can be sustained by persons knowingly working with this equipment, but also by others coming in to contact with sharps that have been discarded or disposed of incorrectly.

Where might I come across sharps?

- Working in a laboratory environment on campus.
- When entering student accommodation to carry out work or investigate an issue.
- When carrying out cleaning of labs, kitchens or student accommodation.
- Undertaking litter picking or waste disposal duties.
- When carrying out external grounds maintenance.

What kind of sharps could I come across?

- Needles and syringes
- Scalpels
- Piercing needles or guns
- Tattooing equipment
- Razor blades

What should I do if I receive a sharps injury?

- Encourage the wound to gently bleed, ideally holding it under running water.
- Wash the wound using running water and plenty of soap.
- Don't scrub the wound while you are washing it.
- Don't suck the wound.
- Dry the wound and cover it with a waterproof plaster or dressing.
- Report the injury to your line manager and occupational health service.
- Seek urgent medical advice as effective prophylaxis (medicines to help fight infection) are available.

Preventing and controlling the risk of exposure to sharps

Our primary duty is to prevent exposure to the risk of a sharps injury. Line Managers should consider whether their staff could be subject to exposure when carrying out their duties, and factor this into their workplace activity risk assessment.

Suitable control measures could include:

- Never put hands where you can't see them.
- Carry out a visual inspection before putting your hands in to a location.
- Never pick up sharps using your hands.
- Wear PPE correctly as identified in your risk assessment.
- Dispose of sharps safely following the correct procedures (see below).
- Ensure information on risks and control measures are communicated to all staff at risk of exposure.

Safe disposal of sharps

Once any sharps have been discovered and any immediate injuries dealt with, follow the below procedure for safe disposal.

- Notify the responsible persons for the room or area of the item(s) discovered and restrict access to them.
- Report via the E&FM Helpdesk the items requiring disposal.
- Only competent persons are to carry out the disposal.
- Use a litter picker or long handed tweezers to pick up the sharps.
- Dispose of in an appropriate sharps box.
- Wash hands thoroughly following disposal.

For further operational disposal guidance see the [Waste Management Guidance Note \(WMGN22\)](#).

Any incidents involving the discovery or injury caused by sharps must be reported to your Line Manager and recorded as an Adverse Event via University reporting systems [here](#).