

10. SHARPS SAFETY & PREVENTION OF BLOODBORNE TRANSMISSION

Adherence to Routine Practices can reduce the transmission of microorganisms (germs). As such, Additional Precautions are not routinely required for the care of people with bloodborne pathogens such as HIV and hepatitis

The prevention of sharps injury and staff exposure to bloodborne pathogens is a component of Routine Practices.

Users of sharps require education and training about how to safely handle sharp devices to prevent injuries to themselves and to others who may encounter the device during or after procedures. Safety programs include a formal incident investigation for every sharp injury occurring in the work setting.

Use of safety engineered devices such as using protected needle devices, needle-free systems with self-sealing ports, and syringes with safety features, have been reported to reduce needlestick injuries. Their use has been identified as a priority in risk reduction strategies. Some models have demonstrated a risk for patient/resident/client (P/R/C). Therefore, careful consideration to both the P/R/C and staff should be taken when selecting safety engineered sharps devices. Refer to [WRHA policy 20.20.020, Sharps, Safe Handling, Use and Disposal \(including Safety-Engineered Needle \(SEN\) Exemption](#).

DO NOT recap used needles. Handle used needles and other sharp instruments with care to avoid injuries during disposal. Dispose of used needles and other used single use sharp items immediately into designated puncture-resistant containers readily accessible at the point of care.

In home care settings:

- Teach P/R/C and caregivers in the home the correct procedures for safe handling and disposal of sharps and sharp containers in according to municipal or regional regulations
- Insure home storage of sharps is in a labelled, puncture-proof container with a tight-fitting lid that prevents leakage
- Sharps containers may be free at some pharmacies or can be for purchase from many pharmacies or medical supply stores.

Protect eyes, nose and mouth (using facial protection) when splashes with blood and/or body fluids are anticipated.

Perform first aid **immediately** if exposed to blood or body fluids:

- Thoroughly rinse the site of a percutaneous injury with running water and gently clean any wound with soap and water
- Flush mucous membranes of the eyes, nose, or mouth with running water if contaminated with blood, body fluids, secretions or excretions
- Thoroughly rinse non-intact skin with running water if contaminated with blood, body fluids, secretions or excretions.

Report immediately to employer after first aid and seek immediate medical attention.

Refer to [WRHA Occupational and Environmental Safety and Health Operational Procedure, Blood and Body Fluid – Post Exposure Management](#).