

### **Needle Disposal**

To dispose of needles and syringes, place them directly into a puncture-resistant bio-hazard sharps container located near the area of use. These are available from Central Stores and must be disposed of as bio-hazardous waste. Refer to the WSU Safety Policies and Procedures Manual section S80.12 and S80.13 for more information.



If you encounter discarded needles that are not yours, never pick them up by hand. Only a mechanical grabbing device, such as forceps or tongs, should be used to pick up sharp items. Contact a custodian or EH&S for assistance with proper disposal.

### **Reporting Needlestick Injuries**

Even with careful planning and prevention techniques, needlesticks still occur. Needle puncture injuries must always be reported just like any other work-related injuries. Log onto the WSU Human Resource Services web site at <http://www.hrs.wsu.edu> and select "Workers' Compensation" in the left-hand column. Here you will find the automated work-place Injury Reporting form, as well as some general information about work-related injuries and the Workers' Compensation system.

### **Getting Assistance**

Additional information about reporting

work-related injuries and illnesses can be found in chapter S25.20 of the WSU Safety Policies and Procedures Manual. For assistance in completing the Injury Reporting form for needlestick incidents, contact your EH&S office.



### **Environmental Health & Safety**

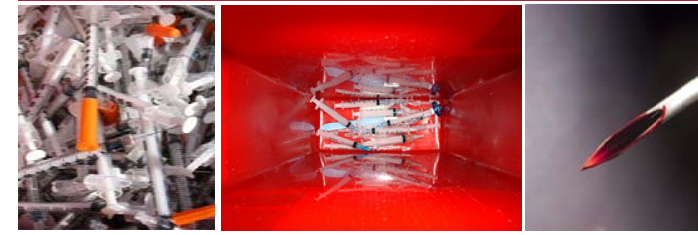
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# Environmental Health and Safety

Consulting Training Service



## Needlesticks and other Sharps Injuries: Prevention and Reporting

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## Needlestick Hazards

Needlestick injuries are wounds caused by needles that accidentally puncture the skin. Being stuck by a needle can contaminate a person's bloodstream with the contents of the needle, causing serious injury or illness. Contamination can include hazardous chemicals, infectious agents, blood from human subjects being injected or from blood drawing, etc. Any of these situations can pose health hazards.



Toxic, corrosive, and carcinogenic chemicals can cause serious health problems. Infectious agents and human blood or other bodily fluids can cause serious disease.

## Avoiding Needlestick Injuries

Extreme caution must be used when handling needles and syringes to avoid autoinoculation or the generation of aerosols during use and disposal. Avoiding needlesticks is a high priority for anyone using needles. There are a number of strategies for avoiding needle injuries, depending on the reason for using the needle.

NIOSH recommends the following precautions to prevent needlesticks:

- Avoid the use of needles where safe and effective alternatives are available.

- Help select and evaluate devices with safety features.
- Use devices with safety features.
- Avoid recapping needles whenever possible.
- Plan for safe handling and disposal before beginning any procedure using needles.
- Discard used needles promptly in appropriate sharps disposal containers.
- Report all needlesticks and other sharps-related injuries promptly to ensure that you receive appropriate follow-up care.
- Tell your supervisor about hazards you observe in your work environment.
- If needles are used in conjunction with human blood, tissues, or bodily fluids, participate in bloodborne pathogen training and follow recommended infection prevention practices, including hepatitis B vaccinations.



### Safe Needle Use

For safety reasons, needles should never be bent, sheared, replaced in the

sheath or guard, or removed from the syringe following use.

Hypodermic needles and syringes should only be used for parenteral injection and aspiration of fluids from diaphragm bottles when no other method is available, and only needle-locking syringes or disposable syringe-needle units should be used for the injection or aspiration of hazardous fluids.

Because some 10 to 25 percent of needlesticks occur when recapping needles, every effort should be made to avoid this practice. Instead, syringes which resheath the needle, needleless systems, and other safety devices should be used whenever possible. Needles should be recapped **only when no other alternative exists**, and then only one-handed methods should be used to avoid injury. To safely recap needles, using the "one-hand" technique:



1. Place the cap on a flat surface and remove your hand from the cap.
2. With one hand, hold the syringe and use the needle to "scoop up" the cap.
3. When the cap covers the needle completely, use the other hand to secure the cap on the needle hub. Be careful to handle the cap at the bottom only (near the hub).

Also available to hold needle sheaths for one-handed resheathing are blocks similar to the one shown here. Contact EH&S for information on ordering such devices.