

Bloodborne Pathogens and Needlestick Prevention



WHAT ARE BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS?

Bloodborne pathogens are infectious microorganisms in human blood that can cause disease in humans. These pathogens include, but are not limited to, Hepatitis B (HBV), Hepatitis C (HCV) and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Needlesticks and other sharps-related injuries may expose workers to bloodborne pathogens. Workers in many occupations, including first aid team members, housekeeping personnel in some industries, nurses and other healthcare personnel may be at risk of exposure to bloodborne pathogens.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO CONTROL EXPOSURE TO BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS?

In order to reduce or eliminate the hazards of occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens, an employer must implement an exposure control plan for the worksite with details on employee protection measures. The plan must also describe how an employer will use a combination of engineering and work practice controls, ensure the use of personal protective clothing and equipment, provide training, medical surveillance, hepatitis B vaccinations, and signs and labels, among other provisions. Engineering controls are the primary means of eliminating or minimizing employee exposure and include the use of safer medical devices, such as needleless devices, shielded needle devices, and plastic capillary tubes.

Emergency Needlestick Information

WORKERS PLEASE NOTE

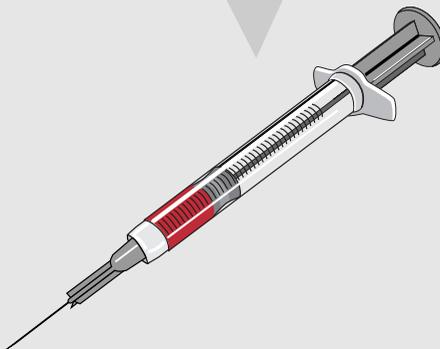
If you experienced a needlestick or sharps injury or were exposed to the blood or other body fluid of a patient during the course of your work, immediately follow these steps:

- Wash needlesticks and cuts with soap and water
- Flush splashes to the nose, mouth, or skin with water
- Irrigate eyes with clean water, saline, or sterile irrigants
- Report the incident to your supervisor
- Immediately seek medical treatment



What Every Worker Should Know

How to Protect Yourself From Needlestick Injuries



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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Robert A. Taft Laboratories

4676 Columbia Parkway

Cincinnati, OH 45226-1998

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use \$300

What infections can be caused by needlestick injuries?

Needlestick injuries can expose workers to a number of blood-borne pathogens that can cause serious or fatal infections. The pathogens that pose the most serious health risks are

- Hepatitis B virus (HBV)
- Hepatitis C virus (HCV)
- Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)—the virus that causes AIDS

HBV vaccination is recommended for all health care workers (unless they are immune because of previous exposure). HBV vaccine has proved highly effective in preventing infection in workers exposed to HBV. However, no vaccine exists to prevent HCV or HIV infection.

Preventing needlestick injuries is the best way to protect yourself from these infections.

Who is at risk of needlestick injury?

Any worker who may come in contact with needles is at risk, including *nursing staff, lab workers, doctors, and housekeepers.*

How common are needlestick injuries among health care workers?

Estimates indicate that 600,000 to 800,000 needlestick injuries occur each year. Unfortunately, about half of these injuries are not reported. *Always report needlestick injuries to your employer to ensure that you receive appropriate followup care.*

What kinds of needles usually cause needlestick injuries?

- Hypodermic needles
- Blood collection needles
- Suture needles
- Needles used in IV delivery systems

Do certain work practices increase the risk of needlestick injury?

Yes. Past studies have shown that needlestick injuries are often associated with these activities:

- Recapping needles
- Transferring a body fluid between containers
- Failing to dispose of used needles properly in puncture-resistant sharps containers

How can I protect myself from needlestick injuries?

- Avoid the use of needles where safe and effective alternatives are available.
- Help your employer select and evaluate devices with safety features that reduce the risk of needlestick injury.
- Use devices with safety features provided by your employer.
- Avoid recapping needles.
- Plan for safe handling and disposal of needles before using them.
- Promptly dispose of used needles in appropriate sharps disposal containers.
- Report all needlestick and sharps-related injuries promptly to ensure that you receive appropriate followup care.
- Tell your employer about any needlestick hazards you observe.
- Participate in training related to infection prevention.
- Get a hepatitis B vaccination.

For additional information, see ***NIOSH Alert: Preventing Needlestick Injuries in Health Care Settings*** [DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2000-108]. Single copies of the Alert are available from the following:

NIOSH-Publications Dissemination
4676 Columbia Parkway
Cincinnati, OH 45226-1998

1-800-35-NIOSH (1-800-356-4674)

Fax: 513-533-8573

E-mail: pubstaff@cdc.gov

Web site: www.cdc.gov/niosh

Needlestick injuries can lead to serious or fatal infections. Health care workers who use or may be exposed to needles are at increased risk of needlestick injury. All workers who are at risk should take steps to protect themselves from this significant health hazard.