

Working Safely with Sharps

Needle-stick and other sharps' injuries are a potential source of exposure to chemicals, biological materials and radioactive materials. Two of the most common causes of needle-stick injuries are recapping needles and improper disposal of needles. Needle/syringe usage may also present a risk of exposure to these materials via sprays or aerosols.



Note: *This fact sheet does not address INTACT lab glassware use and disposal*

Sharps Injury Prevention

The use of needles and other sharp instruments must be justified and all alternative options must be explored such as blunt needles, cannulas, and the use of plastic instead of glass. When no alternative exists for the use of needles and other sharp instruments, the following measures should be taken to reduce or eliminate the likelihood of sharps injuries:

- Needles must never be bent, sheared, broken, recapped, removed from disposable syringes, or otherwise manipulated
- Never pick up broken glass with your hands. Instead use tongs, forceps, scoop or other mechanical means.
- Syringes which re-sheathe the needle, needless systems and other safety engineered sharps should be used whenever possible.
- Continually evaluate your lab's need for sharp objects and explore ways to reduce or eliminate the use of sharps in your lab.

Sharps Disposal

Please consult the University's Chemical Hygiene Plan, Radiation Safety Plan, and Biological Safety Plan for a list of items to be disposed of as sharps. In general the following measures should be taken when disposing of sharps:

- Never place any sharp in the ordinary trash
- Dispose of sharps in a properly labeled sharps container promptly after they are used
- Sharps containers should be placed within easy reach from the point of generation
- Never fill containers more than $\frac{3}{4}$ full
- Once full, sharps containers should be closed and sealed
- Once sharps containers are sealed, contact Environmental Health and Safety at 8-8405 for removal

Emergency Response

If you are involved in a sharps-related injury such as a needlestick, laceration or other injury, the following steps should be taken:

- Immediately wash the affected areas with soap and water
- Notify your supervisor
- If the sharp was contaminated with hazardous chemicals, radiologicals or blood or other infectious material that is transmitted via injection, contact Campus Police at 8-2323 to receive transport to UPMC Emergency Center
- If the injury requires medical attention beyond a bandage or gauze contact Campus Police at 8-2323 to receive transport to UPMC Emergency Center
- Contact Environmental Health and Safety at 8-8182 to determine what forms you may need to fill out
- When in doubt contact Environmental Health and Safety!