

TITLE:	IBC41- Safe Handling and Disposal of Sharps
OVERVIEW:	Sharps injuries can cause considerable anxiety because of the fear of contracting blood-borne diseases. The risk of contacting a disease from a sharps exposure is dependent on the agent exposure. This policy describes the steps necessary for handling and for disposal of sharps in the laboratory to prevent injury.
APPLIES TO:	All individuals working in the laboratory.
DEFINITION(S):	<p>Sharps (sharp objects) – include used needles and syringes, razor blades, broken glass, pipette tips, serological pipettes and other used items that could cause a puncture, cut, or abrasion.</p> <p>Sharps injury – wounds caused by sharps that accidentally puncture, cut, or abrade the skin.</p>
PROCEDURES:	<p>Handling of Sharps</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Needles must not be bent, sheared, broken, recapped, removed from disposable syringes, or otherwise manipulated before disposal. b. Procedure-specific handling and disposal of sharps must be included in the laboratories written Standard Operating Procedures. c. Do not pick up broken glass with hands, use mechanical means such as a brush and dustpan, tongs, or forceps. d. Use syringes with needleless systems and other sharps safety devices whenever possible. e. Additional precautions to be taken to prevent puncture injuries include engineering and work practice controls. <p>Discarding disposable sharps</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Do not re-cap needles. b. Needles, glass (test tubes, serological pipettes, Pasteur pipettes, glass slides, etc.) and disposable sharp instruments (knife blades, lancets, etc.) are to be disposed of in impervious containers that is approved for sharps disposal. These containers must be conveniently and widely available in all areas where there may be handling of sharps. c. Place sharps containers within easy reach of work stations where sharps are generated. d. Never fill sharps container more than $\frac{3}{4}$ full.

- e. Use a size and shape container that will allow the sharp to freely and completely enter the container
- f. Close and seal the top of containers before placing in the larger biohazardous disposal container.
- g. Refer to policy #IBC05, Biohazardous Waste Disposal, for additional information concerning sharps disposal.

Discarding reusable sharps

- a. Reusable sharps must be placed in appropriate, puncture-resistant and leak proof containers until they are reprocessed.
- b. Containers used to transport or store reusable sharps must be placed in the designated biohazard area.
- c. The containers must be red or labeled to include the biohazard sign.
- d. Contaminated instrument/reusable sharps are not stored or reprocessed in such a manner that would require personnel to reach into the container with their hands.

Discarding disposable pipette tips and serological pipettes

- a. Disposable pipette tips and serological pipettes (plastic) **WHETHER CONTAMINATED WITH A BIOHAZARDOUS AGENT OR NOT** must be placed into a hard walled container for disposal (the container does not need to be an approved sharps container).
- b. To dispose, seal the container and place into the large recycling biohazardous waste red container for disposal. **DO NOT PUT INTO THE REGULAR WASTE.**

Sharps injury

- a. Following an injury while working with sharps, stay calm.
- b. Encourage the wound to bleed (gently squeeze).
- c. Wash the area with running water and soap.
- d. Contact your supervisor.
- e. Call the OUCH pager for advise on post exposure follow-up.
- f. Report to Employee Health (during working hours) or to the

	Emergency Department (off hours) for follow-up. Refer to the campus Medical Surveillance Plan for additional information concerning post exposure management.
RECORD KEEPING:	Records concerning an injury occurring while handling sharps will be compiled and retained by the Employee Health department in consultation with the campus Safety Officer.
OTHER INFORMATION:	<p>Needles and syringes, or other sharp instruments, should be used only when there is no alternative.</p> <p>UNMC safety training exercises include educational activities in the safe handling of sharps.</p>
REFERENCES:	UNMC Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Policy, #2004.
STATUS:	Updated: March 24, 2015