NEEDLES AND SHARPS POLICY

<Organization Name> is committed to ensuring the health and safety of our employees, specifically with regards to any hazards that they may encounter while performing their job duties. This policy has been developed to outline the hazards and safety procedures when using needles and sharp instruments and how employees can mitigate those risks to avoid workplace injuries.

DEFINITIONS

Needlestick injuries are: “wounds caused by needles that accidentally puncture the skin.”   
  
Source: Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.

“Sharps” include needles as well as items such as scalpels, lancets, razor blades, scissors, metal wire, retractors, clamps, pins, staples, cutters, and glass items. Essentially, any object that is able to cut the skin can be considered "sharp".

Source: [**Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.**](https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/diseases/needlestick_injuries.html)

POLICY

Needlestick injuries are generally known as a hazard for any employees who work with hypodermic needles and any other needle equipment. Its hazards include:

* The transmission of infectious diseases, including blood-borne pathogens
* The injection of hazardous fluids into the body

At <Organization Name>, there are times when the use of hypodermic needles is necessary. As such, <Organization Name> is committed to communicating to its staff any hazards they may encounter and how best to prevent the risk of injuries while at work.

**Prevention of Needlestick Injuries**

The occurrence of needlestick injuries is often associated with practices such as:

* Recapping needles,
* Improper disposal of used needles,
* Attempting multiple tasks during disassembly or disposal, and
* Working in challenging patient care scenarios with limited lighting.

To reduce the risk of injury, employees working with sharps should strictly adhere to the following guidelines:

* Use disposable needles only once,
* Refrain from recapping or resheathing needles,
* Minimize handling of sharps,
* Keep sharps containers within immediate reach,
* Refrain from recapping needles and syringes, even if needles are replaced,
* Promptly dispose of sharps after use in designated containers,
* Seal and dispose of sharps containers when three-quarters full,
* Refrain from administering medications from the same syringe to another patient, even if the needle has been changed in-between patients,
* Plan for the safe handling and disposal of sharps prior to starting any procedures,
* Request additional training or support if you are unsure about how to use the needle safely,
* Notify the supervisor/manager immediately if a needle penetrates any part of the body so that health and safety measures can be put into place and the employee can receive the appropriate medical attention, if applicable,
* Use personal protective equipment while using needles (E.g., rubber gloves, masks, etc.),
* Handle needles and sharps carefully, avoiding bending, breaking, or pointing and following all manufacturers’ instructions on the safe assembly, use, and disposal of needles and sharps
* [More measures may be added as deemed necessary.]

Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

In healthcare settings, the use of PPE is of utmost importance in reducing the risk of needlestick injury. This may include:

* Gloves,
* Gowns,
* Eye protection (goggles), and
* [More items may be added as deemed necessary.]

Employees must wear appropriate PPE whenever handling sharps or in any potential situation involving exposure to blood or other bodily fluids.

**Safe Disposal of Needles and Sharps**

It is important for employees to recognize that there is a danger from needles and sharps that could result in infectious disease, so it is vitally important to handle them with care. To prevent needle stick injuries, it is imperative to handle needles and sharps safely and dispose of them appropriately.

Source: WorkSafeNB,

* Never put needles in blue bags or recycling bins.
* Place sharp objects in a corrugated box or other puncture-proof container and safely secure contents.
* Clearly label the container “broken glass” or “sharp objects.”
* Place the box separately from garbage bags and bins/bag the box.
* Alternatively, contact your pharmacy to provide a case to safely return needles and sharps

For additional safety measures:

* Employees must always dispose of any sharps in an appropriate container
* These containers must be able to close, be leak-proof, puncture-proof, wide-mouthed, and be located in accessible locations close to treatment areas
* In the event that an employee notices a defect with a sharps container, the employee is responsible for notifying their supervisor or health and safety representative as soon as possible
* To be able to close safely, it is important that any sharps containers are not overfilled
* Sharps containers should be removed and replaced when they are three quarters full
* If an employee recognizes that it is time to empty the sharps container, they must notify a manager or supervisor immediately
* Sharps containers must be sealed, collected, and disposed of in accordance with local and provincial regulations for biomedical waste
* All staff should report every incident in which they find needles or sharps left at the bedside or thrown into the regular garbage
* [More measures may be added as deemed necessary.]

**Managing Exposure Incidents**

In the event of exposure to a needle stick injury, the following actions must be taken:

1. Administer basic first aid to the affected area;
   1. Allow the wound to bleed freely, “milking” the wound if possible; thoroughly wash the affected area with soap and water;
   2. If exposure occurs on the skin or mucous membranes, rinse immediately and thoroughly with water or a saline solution;
2. Report the incident to the manager or supervisor immediately; and
3. Seek evaluation at a hospital or emergency health care facility within two hours of the incident's occurrence.

**Responsibilities**

Management:

* Ensuring that the policy is implemented and followed by all staff,
* Providing training and education on needle stick injury prevention and management,
* Ensuring that appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is available and used by all staff,
* Keeping a record of all injuries and exposures, and
* Monitoring and reviewing the policy regularly to ensure its effectiveness.

Because New Brunswick does not have a formal province-wide program for the disposal of needles, managers are also responsible for contacting <Organization Name>'s pharmacy, regional solid waste organization, or regional service commission for requirements or specific instructions.

Employees:

* Following the policy and procedures for preventing and managing needle stick injuries,
* Reporting all needle stick injuries to management, and
* Participating in training and education on needle stick injury prevention and management.

**Training and Awareness on Needle Stick Injury Prevention**

<Organization Name> will regularly conduct training sessions aimed at educating all employees on the appropriate handling and disposal of needles and sharps, as well as strategies to minimize the risk of needle stick injury.

<Organization Name> will regularly review and update this policy, assess the work environment and workflow, and implement necessary changes.

Any questions regarding this policy should be directed to [Insert the name and title of contact person].