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 for 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 blade, 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.

POLICY

[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.

Hazards of Needlestick Injuries

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

Prevention of Needlestick Injuries

Employees of [Organization Name] are to follow all safety guidelines when using needles.

Safety guidelines include but are not limited to:

* Only using disposable needles once
* Effectively and safely disposing of needles in the appropriate containers
* Requesting additional training or support if an employee is unsure about how to use the needle safely
* Needles and sharps should not be recapped after use, unless specifically designed for that purpose
* Notifying 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
* Using personal protective equipment while using needles (E.g., rubber gloves, masks, etc)
* Handling 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

Additional Safety Practices

* If needles are being utilised to administer medication, the needle must only be used once and only for one individual
* Once a needle has been used, it cannot be used for any other purpose and must be disposed of safely, immediately, and in accordance with regulations for biomedical waste
* Employees may not enter a vial, bag, or bottle with a syringe that has been previously used
* Employees should practise good hygiene and ensure they wash their hands after using needles/sharp instruments even if they were wearing PPE

Work Practices for Sharps Safety

Employees of [Organization Name] may also come into contact with sharps in their positions; the following safety practices must be adhered to:

* It is important for an employees to recognize that there is a danger from sharps that could result in infectious disease and so it is vitally important to handle them with care
* 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

Employer Responsibilities   
  
[Organization Name] will:

* Provide employees who may come in contact with needles and sharps thorough training on the safe handling and disposal of needles and sharps prior to the employee beginning work
* Provide refresher training, as needed
* Provide employees with personal protective equipment such as gloves, masks, gowns, eye protection etc.
* Establish safety and emergency procedures for the safe use and disposal of needles and sharps
* Maintain records of all training related to needles and sharps handling and disposal
* Provide equipment for the safe disposal of needles and sharps at the point of use
* Investigate and follow up on all reports of unsafe practices or needle/sharps incidents/injuries
* Maintain records of all incidents and reports involving needles and sharps unsafe practices/injuries/illnesses and the actions taken to address them
* Confirm procedures are followed to ensure sharps containers are replaced when three quarters (3/4) full (or when indicated fill line is reached) to prevent needlestick injuries at the point of disposal.
* Ensure all biomedical waste is shipped by a reputable Transportation of Dangerous Goods certified vendor
* Consult with the joint health and safety committee or the health and safety representative, if any, for the specific workplace before selecting appropriate safety-engineered medical sharps
* Provide all necessary hygiene requirements such as hand washing stations, eye washing stations, disinfectant, sanitation stations etc

**Please Note:** This is a general safety policy for work involving needles and sharps; [Organization Name] will always take into account specifics regarding the types of work performed and equipment and materials to be used. [Organization Name] will amend and update its safety procedures as necessary to ensure employee safety.