

North York General Hospital Policy Manual

Sharps Handling and Disposal

NUMBER: IV-a-90

CROSS REFERENCE: *Safety Engineered Medical Devices IV-a-91*

Blood Borne Pathogens IV-b-110

Safe Handling, Cleaning and Disposal IV-d-12

ORIGINATOR: *Safety Specialist*

APPROVED BY: *Operations Committee*

ORIGINAL DATE APPROVED: March 1995

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POLICY:

North York General Hospital (NYGH) is committed to the prevention of occupational illnesses and injuries by providing a safe and healthy environment for its employees, physicians, students and volunteers. Therefore, it is the policy of North York General Hospital that all sharps will be handled and disposed of in an appropriate manner to reduce or eliminate the risk of a sharp injury, minimize the risk of exposure to blood borne pathogens and ensure the safety of everyone who could directly or indirectly come in contact with a sharp item.

Sharps Waste

For the purpose of this policy, 'sharps' are any instrument that can puncture or result in a laceration of the skin. This includes: syringes, needles, scalpels, ampoules, razor blades, broken glass or any other sharp medical device with the potential to cause a penetrating injury if not handled in a safe manner.

PROCEDURE/ GUIDELINE:

1. Only staff trained in the use of a sharp device should carry out procedures involving them.
2. **ALL** sharps must be carefully disposed of into sharps containers. Never dispose of sharps into containers used for storage of other wastes.
3. Sharps containers will be puncture resistant, labeled with the biohazard symbol, colour-coded and leak proof.
4. Needles or other sharps are not to be bent, broken or re-capped for the purposes of disposal. Shearing or breaking of contaminated needles is also not allowed.
5. All safety engineered medical devices are to have the safety device engaged before the sharp is disposed of in the appropriate sharps container.
6. Immediately after use, contaminated sharps are to be discarded by the user into the designated sharps containers. See **Appendix A** for the different types of waste streams for sharps disposal.
7. Sharps can potentially be contaminated with many different types of microorganisms; therefore all sharps, unless their origin is known, are to be treated as contaminated.
8. Sharps are not to be left on tables, beds, and procedure or meal trays.
9. Never reach into a sharps container to retrieve a sharp item.
10. Where the transfer of a sharp is required (e.g. in surgical rooms), a neutral zone should be set up using a tray or container to eliminate hand to hand transfer.

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11. Broken glass or lighting tubes shall be placed into separate waste containers. Broken glass should never be placed into regular trash containers. Broken glass and aerosol cans, are disposed of in heavy duty, rigid cardboard boxes labeled "USE CAUTION - BROKEN GLASS, AEROSOL CANS". When full, secure the container with tape and inform Environmental Services.
 12. If necessary, use forceps or another tool to disassemble a sharp or place into the appropriate sharps container.
 13. If sharps that have not been discarded appropriately are identified, carefully dispose of the sharp, inform your manager or supervisor of the incident and complete an employee incident report. The manager or supervisor will follow-up on the incident accordingly and implement appropriate corrective measures. Where the sharp item has originated from another department, the department manager will be notified and that manager is responsible for implementing corrective actions.

Sharps Containers

If children may have access to the area, DO NOT leave open sharps containers on the floor or within easy reach of children.

1. Sharps containers will be located at or near the point of use. There will be clear access to the sharp container.
2. Staff are responsible for closing and locking or securing lids or covers on sharps containers when they are $\frac{3}{4}$ full (or as indicated on sharps container). Full containers shall be removed from wall brackets (where required) and placed in the soiled utility room for removal by the Environmental Services Department.
3. Sharps containers are not to be tampered with and altered to fit a particular piece of equipment. Departments are to determine the appropriate size and type of sharps containers that they require. If a sharps container is identified that has been tampered with or is damaged, the container must be closed and placed into the soiled utility room for removal.

Requesting new/additional sharps containers

1. To request new or additional re-useable sharps containers, contact the Environmental Services department.
2. Disposable sharps containers can be ordered through the Stores Department. Prior to implementing the use of small disposable containers (less than 4L in size), a risk assessment should be done to determine the need. Factors to be considered include current sharps disposal practices and access locations to larger reusable containers.
3. Cardboard boxes with labels are available by contacting the Environmental Services Department.
4. Contact Building Services to have sharps container wall mounting brackets installed.

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Managers and Supervisors

1. Managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that the policy is adhered to by their staff and appropriate resources are provided to support conformance of this policy.
2. With the assistance of Occupational Health, assess new locations for proper placement of sharps containers.

Staff

1. All staff are responsible for adhering to all aspects of this policy and employing safe sharps handling and disposal practices.
2. Staff will report unsafe acts, hazards, near misses or sharp equipment issues to their manager or designate and complete an employee incident report.
3. Staff will report all sharp injuries. See the Blood Borne Pathogens policy (IV-b-110) for details on the reporting and treatment requirements at NYGH.

Occupational Health and Safety

1. In accordance with the Blood Borne Pathogens policy IV-b-110, Occupational Health and Safety will follow-up with all staff who report a sharps injury.

REFERENCES:

Occupational Health and Safety Act R.S.O 1990

Health Care and Residential Facilities Regulation O.Reg. 67/93

JHSC consultation April 2017

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Appendix A – Sharps Waste Disposal Streams

COLOUR CODE	Blue/white Pharmaceutical (Rx)	Yellow Biomedical	Red Cytotoxic/Biologic
			
USE	<p>For disposal of pharmaceutical waste e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ampules, vials, oral medications, syringes and IV bags with residual medications, etc. • needles (sharps) for mixing medications • partially used controlled substances 	<p>For disposal of biomedical sharps, including sharps that have come into contact with blood or bodily fluids.</p>	<p>For disposal of waste that is contaminated through contact with cytotoxic / biologic agents.</p> <p>See the Safe Handling & Disposal of Cytotoxic & Biologic Agents Policy - II-142)</p>