

Needlestick injuries

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Reason | It is possible that you will find a used hypodermic syringe or needle on a site at some time. You need to know what to do if you accidentally prick your skin, as you could become infected with a serious disease. |
| Outline | This talk covers the actions you should take if you discover a needle and if you puncture your skin with it. |



Treat discarded syringes and needles with care



If you suffer a needlestick injury and do not follow this guidance, you could be exposed to the HIV virus, Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C, all of which have serious potential health implications.

Needlestick injuries

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Reason | It is possible that you will find a used hypodermic syringe or needle on a site at some time. You need to know what to do if you accidentally prick your skin, as you could become infected with a serious disease. |
| Outline | This talk covers the actions you should take if you discover a needle and if you puncture your skin with it. |

What is a needlestick injury?

An accidental puncture of the skin by a hypodermic needle.

If you find a needle

1. It has probably been used by a drug user and may be contaminated with infected blood.
2. Do not touch it or move it.
3. Leave a responsible person to safeguard it while you report the matter to your supervisor.
4. If you have a site nurse, they should be informed.
5. If you do not have a nurse on site, the local Environmental Health Department should be informed.
6. If a needle or syringe **must** be moved:
 - if possible, bring the sharps bin to the sharp – always avoid carrying sharps to the bin
 - use suitable PPE such as sharps gloves and suitable plastic tongs or grabbers. Avoid using pliers or similar tools with steel jaws
 - do **not** wrap it in paper or put it into a litter bin
 - if available, ideally place it in a sharps bin, otherwise place it in a clear glass bottle or jar
 - dispose of it safely through the site nurse, local police or Environmental Health Department
 - wash your hands thoroughly.

If you prick your skin

1. Do not panic.
2. Gently squeeze the area around the wound to encourage bleeding.
3. Do not suck the wound.
4. Wash the site of the injury thoroughly with soap and water at the first opportunity.
5. Obtain medical assistance as soon as possible from either the site nurse or the nearest hospital with an accident and emergency department. If you can do so safely, take the syringe or needle with you.
6. If dealt with properly and promptly, the risks of a resulting health problem are minimal.
7. Think about the consequences of not acting promptly.



On what types of site do you think you are most likely to discover used needles or syringes? Due to the secretive nature of drug taking, in which areas of a site do you think that discarded syringes and needles are most likely to be found?

What diseases do you think that you could catch from a needlestick injury?

What could be the worst possible outcome?

What should you do if you prick your skin with a needle on site?



Employees in the refurbishment and demolition sectors of the industry are probably at the greatest risk, especially if the property is derelict.