



Sharps-related injuries, such as needlesticks, occur when needles or other sharp laboratory/clinic objects break through a worker's skin.

These types of injuries are especially hazardous because they can result in contaminants from the sharp object being directly injected into the victim's bloodstream. Depending on their use, sharps could be contaminated with infectious agents (such as HIV or HBV) or hazardous chemicals.

## How Your Actions Can Expose Others to Sharps Injuries:

### Improper Disposal of Sharps

Waste disposal requirements protect custodians and other waste handlers.

- Sharps should never be mixed with regular trash.
- Custodians can suffer needlesticks or cuts when handling trash bags that contain sharps.
- All sharps should be disposed of in labeled or color-coded, leak and puncture proof, closable sharps containers.

### Poor Housekeeping

Maintaining an orderly and clean work environment helps prevent injuries.

- Coworkers could inadvertently contact sharp objects that are left on the benchtop.
- Sharp objects left on the benchtop could become mixed with other materials that are thrown into the regular trash.

## Who is at Risk?

- Lab personnel
- Housekeeping
- Maintenance
- Visitors

## Sharps:

Objects that can penetrate the skin, such as: needles, scalpels, broken glass, broken capillary tubes and exposed ends of dental wires.

## Bloodborne Pathogens:

Infectious microorganisms present in blood that could cause disease in humans. Pathogens like Hepatitis B Virus can live on contaminated object for up to seven days.

## OSHA Regulations

Handling of sharps contaminated with bloodborne pathogens are covered by the Code of Federal Regulations, under the heading 29 CFR 1910.1030.

## Environmental Health and Safety Training

Environmental Health and Safety conducts Bloodborne Pathogens training for employees who are or could potentially be exposed to bloodborne pathogens.

Training schedule is posted at <http://safety.uchicago.edu>

## How to Minimize the Risk

1. Dispose of all sharp materials in the proper waste container.
2. Place the proper sharps waste container directly next to your work station.
3. Properly dispose of sharps as soon as you are done working with them.
4. Do not allow the sharps container to become more than three-quarters full.
5. If you notice sharps in the regular trash, separate and label the trash bag or container.
6. Practice good housekeeping – do not leave sharp objects sitting unprotected on work surfaces.
7. When cleaning up after an experiment, check to ensure that sharps are not mixed with other trash on the benchtop.
8. Never recap, remove, bend, shear, or break needles after use – dispose the needle immediately.



## Please remember...

*Be considerate of your colleagues!*

*Good housekeeping and proper waste disposal are meant to **protect you and protect others!***