

St Hugh's College

Needles, Syringes and Sharp Objects Policy and Procedures

Policy

The hazards presented by hypodermic needles and syringes are no longer just a consideration for people in the medical profession. Unfortunately, these may be left lying around or hidden in unexpected locations, eg down the backs of chairs, behind cupboards or in WCs, etc.

Contact with used syringes or needles may result in ill-health due to infection or illness. Puncture wounds from 'sharps' (ie needles and bladed devices such as scalpels, razors etc.) may cause wounds and bleeding which can make the employee susceptible to infections and viruses in the workplace.

To comply with Health and Safety legislation (1974) and thereby minimise the risk of injury to staff, students and visitors the College will:

- Provide sharps bins for the safe disposal of needles or vials.
- Operate clear handling procedures for the disposal of drug related waste.
- Ensure that training and information is provided for appropriate staff in relation to the safe disposal of sharps or drug related waste.

It is possible when undertaking your duties within College that you may come across discarded sharps. In such circumstances, it is important for you to follow the advice detailed in the procedures below to ensure the personal safety of both yourself and others.

Procedures

Dealing with discarded sharps

- Remember that you may find dangerous items and should be alert to the hazards that they present.
- If you find any dangerous items or suspect their presence in your work area, make sure that the area where you found the item is left as safe as possible and contact your Line Manager, the Nurse, Accommodation and Facilities Manager or the Porters immediately.

If you find a needle:

- Do not hide it.
- Do not separate the needle from the syringe.
- Do not put the cap back on the needle.
- Do not play with the needle or syringe.
- Do not put it in a dustbin, down the drain, down the WC or in a litter bin.
- Do not ignore it – report it.

Needlestick injuries

If you are injured by a discarded sharp:

- Do encourage the wound to bleed (this helps to cleanse it). Do not suck the wound.
- Do, if possible, wash the area with soap and water.
- Do report to the Accident and Emergency Department at the nearest hospital, or your own GP on the same day as the injury occurred.
- Do ensure your Line Manager is informed of the incident and that it is recorded using the standard College accident report form, located in the Lodge.
- Do note the name of the needle's user if known.

Remember that early treatment can prevent infections. Do not put yourself or others at risk, be needle wise.

Needle Users

If you need to dispose of needles:

- Use one of the sharps bins provided; or
- Contact the College Nurse; or
- Contact your doctor's surgery or local health centre for advice.

Location of disposal points (sharps bins)

A sharps bin is located in:

- the Nurse's room,
- the Lodge,
- the Accommodation and Facilities Manager's office.

Procedure for Safe Handling and Disposal of Sharps

If a sharp is found in a College building it will normally be removed safely by the College Nurse, Accommodation and Facilities Manager or Porters.

If a sharp is found in the grounds, one of the above mentioned should contact Oxford City Council Cleansing Department on 01865 252900. During office hours (Monday - Friday 8.00 am – 6.00 pm) somebody will come and remove the needle within the hour. Outside these hours an answerphone message will give the telephone number of the 'duty remover'.

All sharps **MUST** always be disposed of safely by placing them into a correctly assembled container that conforms to British Standard 7320 immediately after use.

If you have been provided with a sharps kit, you must wear hand protection and use the pick up tools rather than making direct hand contact with the object. Always give maximum concentration to the task in hand.

1. Needles should NEVER be re-sheathed and must NEVER be placed in a plastic bag. Sharps must not be left lying around.
2. The plastic sharps container must be assembled correctly prior to use and staff should ensure the lid is secure.
3. The person assembling the sharps container must complete the relevant sections on the label before putting it into use.
4. On no account should a sharps container be left in a position that is readily accessible to members of the public.
5. When not in use the temporary lid closure must be utilised to prevent accidental contact with the contents, eg as a result of the container being knocked over.
6. Whenever possible the discarded needle should be picked up by the syringe body and placed in the sharps container with the needle facing downwards.

If the needle is detached from the syringe body, use the pick up tool around the collar to ensure the sharp point of the needle is facing downwards towards the container.

7. When placing used sharps into the container, ensure that all contents actually pass the plastic flap and enter the container. Items should not be retrieved from sharps bins. Unsheathed sharps should NEVER be passed directly to another member of staff except where it is not practical for the sharps user to directly dispose of their own sharps.
8. Where possible, dispose of the syringe and needle as a complete unit into the sharps container.
9. The sharps container must be discarded when it is two-thirds full. Broken containers should be reported to the College Nurse.
10. Sharps boxes should be sealed, using the lid provided **before** it becomes unsafe to put more sharps in. You must not press down sharps in the container to make more room and on no account attempt to remove sharps from the box.
11. Prior to disposal of the sharps container, staff must ensure the lid is locked (using the permanent lid closure) and relevant details completed on the label (eg date locked etc.).

12. A full sharps box should be sealed effectively and labelled and then carefully taken to the Nurse's office, or during vacations the Accommodation and Facilities Manager's office. Staff carrying waste containers should take suitable precautions.

Remember, TAKE NO RISKS:

1. Always wear gloves, then discard.
2. Use pick up tools provided, then discard.
3. Place sharps downward in the box.
4. Close the lid of the box immediately after use.
5. Store the box safely until it is taken for disposal.

Prescription-only medicines are subject to special disposal requirements and should either be returned to a Pharmacy or advice sought from the Occupational Health Unit. In most cases, containers that have held these medicines may be disposed of in glass waste or ordinary waste if they have been washed and the label removed or defaced.

Sharps Spillages

If used sharps are spilled from a sharps container, the following procedure should be followed:

- Wear protective clothing.
- Gather up spilled sharps using a dustpan and brush and put them into a sharps container.
- Dispose of protective clothing.
- Wash hands.

Useful contacts

John Radcliffe Infirmary 01865 741166

University's Occupational Health Service
10 Parks Road
Oxford

Telephone: 01865 (2)82676

Email: enquiries@uohs.ox.ac.uk

Opening Hours: Monday - Thursday 8.30 am -1.00 pm, 2.00 - 5.00 pm

Friday 8.30 am -1.00 pm, 2.00 pm - 4.00 pm