HIVAIDS Precautions – Needles and Sharps and Handling Contaminated Materials – Fact Sheets

WHAT PRECAUTIONS SHOULD BE USED WHEN WORKING WITH NEEDLES AND SHARPS?

Consider all needles and sharps as being infected. The user of the sharp should plan for its safe use and disposal.

- Wear appropriate gloves when touching and or handling items that are visibly soiled with blood or bodily fluids. Gloves must be changed in between contact of individuals.
- If there is potential for splashing, masks and eye protection must be worn.
- Use puncture-resistant containers for disposal of sharps and needles.
- Containers should have a max fill line, be leak proof, and closable.
- Label containers with symbols or words – for example usage of the biohazard symbol or “CAUTION: WASTE SHARPS.”
- Clean and sterilize reusable syringes before reusing.
- Place large bore reusable needles in puncture-proof containers.
- Use clamps to remove lancet and scalpel blades from holders, not your fingers.
- Do not recap, bend, break or remove needles by hand from disposable syringes or otherwise handle after use.

HOW SHOULD DECONTAMINATION AND WASTE DISPOSAL BE HANDLED?

- Disinfect or sterilize medical devices or apparatus according to manufacturer’s instructions.
- Clean instruments thoroughly before disinfecting with a germicide or medical grade disinfectant.
- Incinerate or autoclave infectious waste before disposal.
- Most Canadian jurisdictions have guidelines or regulations for the management of biomedical waste. Confirm what the requirements are for your jurisdiction.

HOW SHOULD BLOOD/BODY FLUID SPILLS BE CLEANED?

- Remove visible material from patient care areas and decontaminate.
- Remove blood or body fluids with absorbent paper towels. Dispose according to hospital policy.
- Clean area and use medical grade disinfectant.

HOW SHOULD I HANDLE LABORATORY SPECIMENS?

- Place collected blood and body fluid specimens in sterile containers. Securely close lid.
- Clean the outside of the container with disinfectant if visibly contaminated.
- Place container in a clear impervious plastic bag.
- Label container “Blood and Body Fluid Precautions.” Label requisition and attach to outside of bag.
- Do not transport in a vacuum/pneumatic system.

HOW SHOULD PATIENT CARE ARTICLES BE HANDLED?

- Use disposable patient care articles whenever possible.
- Incinerate or dispose of disposable articles according to hospital policy.
- Place articles soiled with blood in impervious bag. Label “Blood and Body Fluid Precautions.”
- Reprocess reusable items according to hospital policy.

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