

# Shield the needle.

# Shield yourself.

*Your health matters, too.*

## Why it matters.

Occupational needlestick injuries are still a common occurrence and can happen at any time during use, disassembly, and disposal of the needle. Needlestick injuries can occur in **any setting** and injure **anyone**. This can include home healthcare providers, dental professionals, surgical professionals, sanitation workers, and any occupation with potential exposure to needles, blood, and body fluids.

## What if I am exposed?



Wash area with soap and water.



Seek medical attention.



Report the injury.

## How can I prevent a needlestick injury?

### *Prepare for needle use*

- Anticipate the risk of injury.
- Work in adequate lighting.
- Organize your work area.
- Plan safe needle handling and disposal.

### *Be proactive*

- Assist in the selection of engineered sharps devices
- Participate in blood-borne pathogen training and device use training
- Inform your employer of hazards

### *Always use safe work practices*

- Avoid passing of sharps.
- Stop working if you feel rushed.
- Remain focused.
- Use safety engineered sharps devices.
- Activate the device safety feature.
- Avoid manipulation of the needle.
- Prevent patient movement.
- Wear protective equipment.
- Keep needles pointed away.
- Be aware of your surroundings during needle use and during clean-up.

### *Ensure proper disposal and clean-up*

- Do NOT recap needles after use.
- Dispose of needles in sharps containers.
- Do not overfill sharps containers.
- Never put your hands into sharps containers.

In 2021, **over 800** work-related needlestick injuries requiring a visit to a NJ emergency department were identified.

## Recognize risky activities

- Use of needles that require manipulation after use
- Disposal of needles attached to tubing
- Improper disposal
- Transferring fluid between containers
- Lack of an organized workspace
- Bumping into another worker inserting and withdrawing needles
- Sharps left in unexpected places
- Decontamination of used devices
- Not using personal protective equipment
- Lack of safety engineered devices

## Recognize risky devices

- Hypodermic syringes
- Blood collection needles
- Suture needles
- IV delivery system needles
- Disposable syringes
- Hollow-bore needles
- Winged needles



## Additional Considerations

### Home healthcare providers

- Seek safety engineered sharps and sharps disposal containers from your employer.
- Bring sharps containers to clients' homes.
- Store sharps containers in out-of-reach places to prevent injury of others in the home.
- Evaluate the home environment and create an organized space before needle use.
- Secure sharps containers during transport.

### Surgical specialties

- Consider the use of blunt-tip suture needles.
- Try "double-gloving" for increased protection.
- Injuries can occur when:
  - Sewing towards someone holding back other tissue
  - Loading/repositioning the needle in the holder
  - Tying the tissue with the needle still attached
  - Passing the needle hand-to-hand
  - Leaving the needle on the operative field.

### Dental professionals

- Organize equipment before use.
- Avoid hand placement near sharps during procedures.
- Seek safer devices for administering anesthesia.
- Be cautious when cleaning sharps.

Of the reported needlestick injuries in 2021, injuries frequently occurred during the administration of anticoagulants, during blood draws, cleaning after a procedure, and disposal of needles after use.

### For additional resources on needlestick prevention:

Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), Bloodborne Pathogens and Needlestick Prevention:  
[osha.gov/bloodborne-pathogens/standards](https://www.osha.gov/bloodborne-pathogens/standards)

NJDOH Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health (PEOSH), Bloodborne Pathogens Standard:  
[nj.gov/health/workplacehealthandsafety/peosh/peosh-health-standards/bbp.shtml](https://www.nj.gov/health/workplacehealthandsafety/peosh/peosh-health-standards/bbp.shtml)

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), Preventing Needlestick Injuries in Healthcare Settings:  
[cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2000-108/default.html](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2000-108/default.html)