



**HURON PERTH & AREA  
ONTARIO HEALTH TEAM**

**INFECTION PREVENTION AND  
CONTROL POLICY MANUAL**

## **SHARPS SAFETY POLICY**

Approved by: HPA OHT IPAC Working Group

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### **Scope:**

The documents in the Huron Perth & Area Ontario Health Team (HPA OHT) Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Policy Manual are intended to be aligned/adopted by all HPA OHT member organizations. The policies are designed to create a standard and evidence-based approach to IPAC practice resulting in a consistent healthcare experience while minimizing the risk of healthcare-associated infections. They should be reviewed by organizations occupational health and safety and/or infection prevention and control committee(s) for their endorsement, where applicable. These policies are most effective when used in conjunction with organizational policies that address client/patient/resident, facility, and sector-specific needs.

### **Purpose:**

To protect staff and others in the healthcare environment from blood borne infectious diseases by reducing the risk of sharps injuries, such as needle sticks, cuts, and scratches, through safe work practices and the use of safety engineered medical devices.

### **Policy:**

Safe handling of sharps is an essential part of Routine Practices.

All healthcare workers (HCWs) are required to handle, store, and dispose of sharps in a manner that reduces the risk of exposure to everyone in the healthcare setting. All healthcare settings in Ontario are required by law to use safety-engineered needles, according to the Needle Safety Regulation (O. Reg. 474/07).

### **Safe Handling of Sharps:**

#### **Before use**

- Healthcare settings will offer Hepatitis B vaccine to all non-immune HCWs who may be exposed to biohazardous waste or contaminated sharps (see [Healthy Workplace Policy](#)).
- Whenever possible, choose safety-engineered medical devices (ex. needles, lancets, blades, and clinical glass). Facilities must only purchase new sharps that include safety mechanisms unless no other option exists.
- Replace sharps containers once they reach the fill line, usually no more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  full. Do not overfill.

#### During use

- Provide authorized sharps containers at the point-of-care and in areas where clients may use needles or other sharps for prompt disposal after use.
- Do not leave used sharps unattended
- Do not pass exposed sharps from person to person
- Sharps must not be purposely bent, broken, or removed from disposable syringes.
- Never recap used needles

#### After use

- Dispose of all sharps in sharps containers immediately after use. If no sharps container is available, use a rigid, sealable, puncture-resistant plastic container (ex. an empty laundry detergent jug).
- Do not ask someone else to dispose of sharps, accept used sharps from someone else, or transport unprotected sharps outside of the room they are used in.
- Do not overfill sharps containers. Disposed needles are not to exceed the designated line on the side of the approved sharps container. The container must be able to close securely.
- Never reach into sharps containers
- Follow appropriate guidelines for disposal of all filled sharps containers. Do not dispose of sharps in regular waste.
- Report any noted problems or concerns associated with a sharps container immediately.

#### Handling waste and linen

- Watch for sharps when handling waste or linen – see [Safe Handling of Waste and Linen Policy](#).
- If you find a needle that was disposed of incorrectly:
  - Put on a pair of gloves. ○ Ideally, take a sharps container to the needle and syringe. ○ NEVER re-cap a needle and syringe even if a cap is available.
  - Use tongs, or puncture-resistant gloves, to pick up the needle and syringe. ○ Carefully place the needle and syringe in the sharps container.
  - Report the incident to your supervisor or manager.

#### **Reporting Sharps Injuries:**

All sharps injuries must be reported immediately to your supervisor and, if applicable, Occupational Health. Healthcare workers will be required to complete an incident report describing what happened to assist in the prevention of future sharps injuries.

In the event of the exposure to blood or body fluid, please refer to the [Exposure to Blood and Body Fluid Policy](#) for detailed guidance.

**Healthcare Worker Education:**

Healthcare settings will provide, and healthcare workers will participate in, annual training and education around the safe handling of sharps. Organizations will maintain records of healthcare worker education.

Definitions:

**Healthcare setting:** Any location where health care is provided, including settings where emergency care is delivered, hospitals, complex continuing care, rehabilitation hospitals, longterm care homes, mental health facilities, outpatient clinics, community health centers and clinics, physician offices, dental offices, offices of other health professionals and home health care.

**Healthcare Worker:** Any person delivering care to a client/patient/resident. This includes, but is not limited to, the following: emergency service workers, physicians, dentists, nurses, respiratory therapists and other health professionals, personal support workers, clinical instructors, students and home health care workers. In some non-acute settings, volunteers might provide care and would be included as health care providers.

**Point-of-Care:** The place where three elements occur together: the client/patient/resident, the health care provider and care or treatment involving client/patient/resident contact. Point-of-care products should be accessible to the health care provider without the provider leaving the zone of care, so they can be used at the required moment.

**Safety-Engineered Medical Device:** A non-needle sharp or a needle device used for withdrawing body fluids, accessing a vein or artery, or administering medications or other fluids, with a built-in safety feature or mechanism that effectively reduces exposure incident risk. Safety-engineered devices are licensed by Health Canada.

**Sharps:** Objects capable of causing punctures or cuts (e.g., needles, syringes, blades, clinical glass).

References:

Needle Safety, Ontario Reg. 474/07. Available from: <http://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/070474>

Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.O. 1990, c O.1. Available from:

[http://www.elaws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_90o01\\_e.htm](http://www.elaws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90o01_e.htm)

Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee (PIDAC). Infection Prevention and Control for Clinical Office Practice. <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/b/2013/bphttps://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/b/2013/bp-clinical-office-practice.pdf?la=enclinical-office-practice.pdf?la=en>

Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee (PIDAC). Routine Practices and Additional Precautions in All Health Care Settings.

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Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee (PIDAC). Best Practices for Environmental Cleaning for Prevention and Control of Infections in All Health Care Settings., 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. April 2018.

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/B/2018/bp-environmental-cleaning.pdf>

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