

## Use of Safety-Engineered Needles

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### Introduction

The health unit is committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment for all staff by reducing the risk of exposure to blood and body fluids. Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) data identifies that nurses have a significant number of reported exposures. Staff in the Vaccine Preventable Diseases, Sexual Health and Oral Health programs, and all agency nurses who participate in influenza immunization clinics, work with sharps and are therefore at risk for exposure to blood and body fluids which may carry infectious disease agents. The risk of acquiring a blood borne disease is related to three factors:

- circumstances of the injury
- infectious status of the source person or source blood
- susceptibility of the person injured

The circumstances of the injury include the type of device, the degree of blood contact and the blood volume. Transmission is greatest with devices containing large volumes of blood such as large gauge needles and hollow bore needles. Syringes and hypodermic needles are most often involved in sharps related injuries. Injuries occur more often after using the device when recapping (not recommended) or disposing of sharps. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) data indicate that risk of injury increases with devices that require handling after use, such as disassembly, recapping needles or failure to dispose of sharp objects immediately and properly.

Ontario Regulation 474/07 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act requires the use of safety engineered needles in health care procedures. The regulation, which was implemented in public health units July 1, 2010, allows for three exceptions:

1. The workplace is located in a part of Ontario in which,
  - i. a declaration of emergency made under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* is in effect, or
  - ii. a situation exists that constitutes or may constitute a serious risk to public health.
2. The employer’s supplies of safety-engineered needles appropriate for the work have been exhausted.
3. The risk of harm from postponing the work until a safety-engineered needle appropriate for the work becomes available is greater than the risk of harm from using a hollow-bore needle that is not a safety-engineered needle.

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure staff has access to, and understand the importance of, the use of safety engineered needles when working in the agency. The use of these needles will

help to decrease the risk of transmission of blood borne pathogens through injuries from sharp medical devices. Training and annual review of this policy will assist in the promotion and support the health and safety of all employees related to the use of safety engineered needles. This policy will support compliance with the relevant legislation.

### ***Legislative Authority***

Ontario Regulation 474/07 – Needle Safety Regulation, under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (July 2010)  
Occupational Health and Safety Act (1990)  
Guideline C-4: The Management of Biomedical Waste in Ontario (November, 2009)

### ***Policy Definitions and Interpretation***

**Staff:** all persons employed or working for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, including full time, part time and casual personnel and students.

**Supervisor /manager:** the person to whom a staff member directly reports. Staff may report to a supervisor, manager, director or medical officer of health.

**Safety-Engineered Needle:** means

- (a) a hollow-bore needle that,
  - (i) is designed to eliminate or minimize the risk of a skin puncture injury to the worker, and
  - (ii) is licensed as a medical device by Health Canada, or
- (b) a needleless device that,
  - (i) replaces a hollow-bore needle, and
  - (ii) is licensed as a medical device by Health Canada. O. Reg. 474/07, s. 1.

### ***Policy***

All staff are required to use agency approved safety engineered needles when working in all agency clinic settings as per Ontario Regulation 474/07 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. The agency will provide the needles and Clinical Service management will ensure the provision of training to reduce the risk of injury from carrying out clinical procedures.

### ***Procedures***

1. Staff will use safety engineered needles which are purchased by the agency and approved by Health Canada, for all clinic activities.
2. All needles and sharps shall be handled and disposed of according to the manufacturer's recommendations, in accordance with Guideline C-4: The Management of Biomedical Waste in Ontario, and in a manner which does not endanger themselves or others.
3. Used needles will not be recapped, bent or removed.
4. Used needles and medical sharps will be disposed of in biohazardous containers, by the staff person using them.

5. All sharps injuries must be reported immediately to the program supervisor or manager. A risk assessment will be completed and appropriate measures may be taken as per policy LG0106 Mandatory Blood Testing of Individuals For Bloodborne Diseases
6. Staff will be provided with an annual review of proper use of safety engineered needles and have an opportunity to provide feedback on the products the agency has purchased for use in clinics.
7. Oral Health, Sexual Health and Vaccine Preventable Diseases program staff may use slightly different devices and will have specific procedures outlining the use and disposal of the devices as they relate to their settings.

***Related Policies***

HS0102 Staff Exposure to Blood and Body Fluids

HS0107 Staff Immunization Recommendations

**Final Approval Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

Review/Revision History: