

Heales Medical

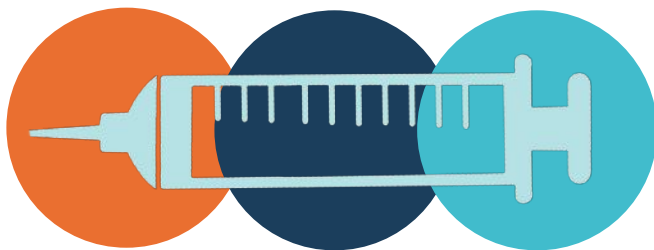


Needle-stick/Sharps Injuries

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?
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PREVENTION



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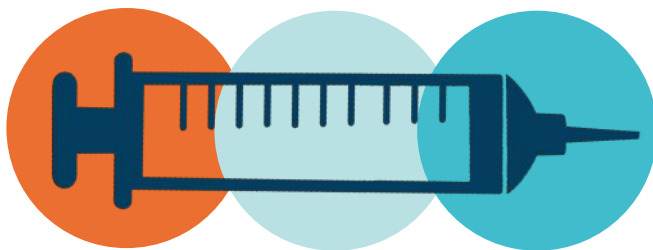
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What is a needle-stick/sharps injury?

An inoculation injury is:

Needle-stick or sharps injury (percutaneous injury): where an accidental puncture of the skin has taken place by a contaminated needle or sharps instrument (blades, dental probes, scalpels).

Human bite (percutaneous injury): Blood Borne Virus (BBVs) are also potentially transmissible by a human bite if the bite breaks the skin of the person bitten.

Mucocutaneous injury: where blood, or bodily fluids mixed with blood comes into contact with a mucous membrane (eyes, nose, mouth, cuts).

Who is at risk?

Those working in the Health Care sector are the most at risk from inoculation injuries. This includes doctors, nurses, dentists, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, podiatrists, dental nurses, students. Nonclinical staff such as housekeeping staff may also be exposed to inoculation injuries.

Injuries can also occur in other fields of work such as the prison service, police, parks constabulary, probation services, social workers, youth workers, funeral industry, body piercing/body art industry.

Individual risks may vary according to the nature of work undertaken so risk assessment should be an ongoing process.

The risks of transmission following an inoculation injury to a HCW from an infected patient has been estimated at:

1 in 3 when the source patient is infected with Hepatitis B

1 in 30 for a patient infected with Hepatitis C

1 in 300 for a HIV positive patient

The Risks

Risks of infection from BBVs will vary on an individual basis, depending on the level of immunity, type of contact and exposure to and type of disease. Generally, your risk of being infected with hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV is low although prevalence rates of BBVs are known to be higher in certain populations and groups.

This may include:

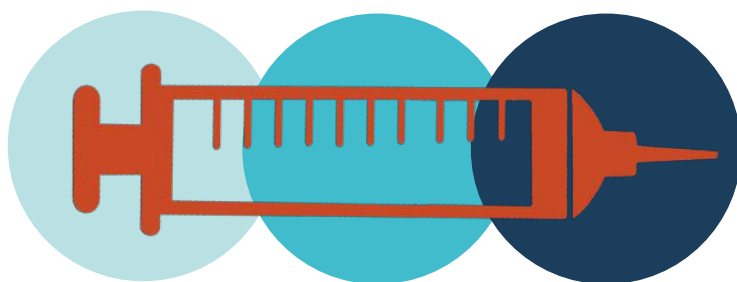
- People who have injected drugs intravenously
 - People who have unprotected sex with several partners?
 - People who have travelled to high BBV risk countries
 - People with a recent history of body piercing, tattoos and blood transfusion, organs or body products that have not been screened for BBVs
- The risks are higher if:
- There is visible blood on the implement that caused the injury
 - The injury was caused by a needle that had been placed in a source patient's artery or vein
 - There is a high virus load in the source patient's blood e.g. terminal HIV



Hepatitis C: There is currently no vaccine available to prevent hepatitis C infection following an inoculation injury.

HIV: There are currently no vaccines available to prevent the HIV.

If you come into contact with HIV positive body fluid or tissues, report the incident to the needle-stick helpline and go to the local Accident and Emergency department for PEP (post exposure prophylaxis). Contact OH for a follow up.



Immunisation against blood-borne viruses

All health care workers, including students and trainees who have direct contact with patient's blood or other potentially infectious body fluids or tissues, are expected to be immunised against the hepatitis B virus. The hepatitis B vaccine is known to provide up to 90% of protection to recipients. Those who are not immunised and sustain an injury will receive immediate treatment to prevent seroconversion of the virus. However, immunisation does not lessen the need to follow strict safe handling of sharps and bodily fluid handling procedures.

Common causes of NSIs

- Not using safe sharps
- Overfull sharps bin
- Non-compliance with standard infection control precautions
- Inadequate disposal of clinical waste
- Not using protective equipment

"All employers are required under existing health and safety law to ensure that risk of sharps injuries from needles are adequately assessed, and that appropriate preventative and control measures are in place. The Sharps Regulations build on the existing law and provide specific detail on requirements that must be taken by healthcare employers and their contractors."

The Health and Safety (Sharp Instruments in Healthcare) Regulations 2013



NSI Prevention

- Refresh yourself on your procedures and training
- Make sure your disposal procedures are up to date
- Make yourself aware of your organisations safer sharps
- Check your training on safer sharps
- Always think "can a safer sharp be used here"?
- Read guidance on sharps safety



IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

When you have sustained a needle stick or sharps injury
remain calm, and be sure to:



**ENCOURAGE
BLEEDING**



**WASH AREA
IMMEDIATELY**



**CALL
OCCUPATIONAL
HEALTH**



**REPORT AND
COMPLETE
INCIDENT FORM**

NSI HELPLINE: 03333 449 006

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