

Sharps Procedure

1. Purpose

Inala Community House recognises the potential risk of injury from sharps. For the purpose of this procedure, 'sharps' includes, syringes, needles, scalpels, razor blades, broken glass or any other sharp implement with the potential to cause a penetrating injury if not handled in a safe manner.

Sharps can potentially be contaminated with many different types of micro-organisms and the risk from blood borne viruses e.g. Human immunodeficiency viruses (HIV), and Hepatitis B and C is generally well known. Other risks such as tetanus and other micro-organisms that are found in contaminants such as blood, faeces, sewerage, human or animal secretions are not so well known. Therefore, all sharps, should be treated as contaminated.

This procedure seeks to ensure that sharps are disposed of safely and appropriately.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to all people engaged by Inala Community House. For the purposes of this procedure, these shall be referred to as workers.

3. Procedure

3.1 How to Prevent Sharps Injuries

ICH undertakes site inspections to ensure the safety of all persons present however all workers should be aware of the possibility of sharps being present and what to do if a hazard is located.

Workers should remain aware by observing their surroundings checking both the ground and any available surfaces where sharps could be located.

Workers should never place their hands into areas where sharps may be concealed (e.g. overgrown gardens, rubbish bins, etc.).

Workers should not pick up sharps unless they are familiar with this procedure. If a worker is unsure, they should report this to their Manager or to HR.

3.2 Picking Up Sharps

If a worker identifies a sharp the first thing that should be done is to make the area safe. This may be achieved by:

1. If you do not have a container handy, place something over the offending item (a cone or other item) if possible
2. Move other people away
3. If the item is in a doorway or path find another route for people to use

To dispose of a sharp safely, comply with the above steps then:

1. Ensure that people are not near the sharp and a safe distance is kept
2. Place the sharps container (which is yellow and clearly identified as a sharps/infectious waste container) down as close as possible to the sharp (to avoid carrying the sharp as much as possible). Ensure that it is on a level surface and do not hold it in place
3. Use your hands, or if you prefer use thin gloves which do not interfere with your dexterity or alternatively, if available use needle-proof gloves. Do not use implements to pick up needles as this increases the risk of flicking of the sharps
4. Do not attempt to pick up multiple sharps at the same time, separate them carefully using a stick or other item (being careful not to flick the needles)
5. If it is a needle/syringe, do not try to recap the needle. Pick it up by the middle of the barrel, do not touch the needle and keep the point facing away from yourself and others
6. Place the sharp into the sharps container. For syringes, the needle should go in first. Do not overfill these containers. For any larger items (not including needles or syringes), these can be placed in an appropriate container.
7. Any other items which may have come into contact with blood should either be placed inside the container or double plastic bagged
8. Make sure the lid is properly secured and then use tape to cover the lid. Store securely until it is able to be disposed of appropriately
9. Wipe items such as needle-proof gloves (or discard of disposal gloves) with a damp cloth (dispose of the cloth after use). Wash your hands.

3.3 Disposal of Sharps

For correct disposal of sharps or blood contaminated items, contact the Queensland Clean Needle Helpline (contact details above). Most pharmacies will also take sharps provided they are placed in appropriate containers.

Needles/syringes should never be disposed of in rubbish, tossed down the drain or down toilets. This is against the law.

3.4 Properties Leased from Brisbane City Council

Brisbane City Council may be called to report that a sharp/sharps have been located on a leased property. Follow their advice.

3.5 Potential or Actual Injuries

If a person sustains an actual or potential 'needle stick/sharps' injury it can cause significant anxiety

If a needle stick injury occurs:

- Ensure the environment is safe (e.g. no other sharps nearby)
- Keep calm and if assisting someone else, try to keep them calm
- If treating someone else, wear disposable gloves
- Where possible, remove contaminated clothing
- Wash the injured area thoroughly for 2 minutes with soap and warm water. Do not squeeze or rub the area of the puncture.
- Cover the wound with a band aid or similar dressing
- Encourage the injured person to go straight to the nearest hospital or to their doctor. **All workers who sustain a sharps injury in which there is any risk of contamination must attend the nearest hospital or their doctor as soon as possible for assessment, advice and if necessary counseling.**
- Report the incident to your Manager and HR and complete an Incident Report. Details of this report will be recorded in the Incident Register.

3.6 Support for Workers

Staff are encouraged to access the EAP Assist service at any time where they feel further support may be required.

For other workers, Lifeline offers 24 hour support by calling 13 11 14.

3.7 Advice

Advice can be sought from the Queensland Clean Needle Helpline (phone: 1800 633 353).

4. Review

This procedure shall be reviewed every 3 years.

5. Related Documents

Policies

Workplace Health and Safety Policy