

## **Preventing Needlestick Injuries in Health Care Settings**

### **WARNING!**

**Health care workers who use or may be exposed to needles are at increased risk of needlestick injury. Such injuries can lead to serious or fatal infections with bloodborne pathogens such as hepatitis B virus, hepatitis C virus, or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).**

**Employers** of health care workers should implement the use of improved engineering controls to reduce needlestick injuries:

- Eliminate the use of needles where safe and effective alternatives are available.
- Implement the use of devices with safety features and evaluate their use to determine which are most effective and acceptable.

Needlestick injuries can best be reduced when the use of improved engineering controls is incorporated into a comprehensive program involving workers. Employers should implement the following program elements:

- Analyze needlestick and other sharps-related injuries in your workplace to identify hazards and injury trends.

- Set priorities and strategies for prevention by examining local and national information about risk factors for needlestick injuries and successful intervention efforts.
- Ensure that health care workers are properly trained in the safe use and disposal of needles.
- Modify work practices that pose a needlestick injury hazard to make them safer.
- Promote safety awareness in the work environment.
- Establish procedures for and encourage the reporting and timely followup of *all* needlestick and other sharps-related injuries.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of prevention efforts and provide feedback on performance.

**Health care workers** should take the following steps to protect themselves and their fellow workers from needlestick injuries:

- Avoid the use of needles where safe and effective alternatives are available.
- Help your employer select and evaluate devices with safety features.
- Use devices with safety features provided by your employer.
- Avoid recapping needles.
- Plan for safe handling and disposal before beginning any procedure using needles.
- Dispose of used needles promptly in appropriate sharps disposal containers.
- Report all needlestick and other sharps-related injuries promptly to ensure that you receive appropriate followup care.
- Tell your employer about hazards from needles that you observe in your work environment.
- Participate in bloodborne pathogen training and follow recommended infection prevention practices, including hepatitis B vaccination.

For additional information, see ***NIOSH Alert: Preventing Needlestick Injuries in Health Care Settings*** [DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2000-108]. Single copies of the Alert are available from the following:

NIOSH—Publications Dissemination  
4676 Columbia Parkway  
Cincinnati, OH 45226-1998

Telephone: 1-800-35-NIOSH (1-800-356-4674)

Fax: 513-533-8573

E-mail: [pubstaft@cdc.gov](mailto:pubstaft@cdc.gov)

Web site: [www.cdc.gov/niosh](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh)

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