



## Policy and Procedure for Safe Disposal of Sharps

### Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide direction on the safe management of sharps / needle stick adverse events and the management of mucocutaneous (spits) exposure to blood or body fluids. Sharps include: any item which may puncture the skin e.g. needles, lancets, blades or teeth.

### Scope

These guidelines refer to all myhomecare.ie employees. The guidelines require all staff to adopt a responsible attitude to preventing and reporting such adverse events.

### Responsibility

- It is the responsibility of all myhomecare.ie staff to be familiar with and adhere to these guidelines.
- It is the responsibility of managers to ensure myhomecare.ie staff are familiar with the guidelines and to monitor compliance.

### Guidelines

Management of needle stick/exposure incidents requires the following:

- Administration of First Aid.
- Report incident immediately to senior member of staff.
- Arrange for the injured person to attend Accident and Emergency.
- Appropriate follow-up offered to injured person and source person (for instance counselling, health surveillance).
- Blood test for baseline on source person (determined at A&E).
- Risk Assessment.

### First Aid

The first aid given is based on the type of exposure (e.g. splash, needle-stick or other injury) and the means of exposure.

### Needle Stick, Sharps Injury or Cut Intact skin

The injured person should:

- Immediately wash the affected area with soap and water.
- Allow injury to bleed freely.
- DO NOT SUCK THE PUNCTURE SITE.
- Cover the site with water proof dressing.
- Dispose of sharp carefully into an approved sharps container.
- Report the incident to the senior member of staff on duty immediately.
- The injured person should then contact an Accident and Emergency
- A blood sample may need to be taken from the service user if deemed necessary with consent.

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### **Non intact skin**

The injured person should:

- Immediately wash the affected area with soap and water. DO NOT use disinfectant on skin. DO NOT scrub or rub the area.
- Dispose of sharp carefully into an approved sharps container.
- Report the incident to the senior member of staff on duty immediately.
- The injured person should then contact an Accident and Emergency.
- A blood sample may need to be taken from the service user if deemed necessary with consent.

### **Splash of blood or body fluids to eyes**

- Flush the area gently but thoroughly with running water or saline for at least 15 minutes while the eyes are open.
- Keep eyelid gently inverted.
- Report the incident to the senior member of staff on duty immediately.
- The injured person should then contact an Accident and Emergency.
- A blood sample may need to be taken from the service user if deemed necessary with consent.

### **Splash of blood or body fluids to mouth or nose**

- Immediately spit out the blood or fluids and rinse the mouth with water several times.
- Blow the nose and clean the affected area with water or saline.
- Report the incident to the senior member of staff on duty immediately.
- The injured person should then contact an Accident and Emergency
- A blood sample may need to be taken from the service user if deemed necessary with consent.

### **Risk Assessment**

- The appropriate adverse event, investigation and risk assessment documentation will be completed.
- The event will be examined locally by the myhomecare.ie Health and Safety Committee.
- The event may be brought to the attention of the Health and Safety Authority.

### **Practical guidance on prevention of sharps injuries**

To avoid sharps injuries:

- Ensure that the service user is adequately prepared for the procedure.
- Place the sharps container within arm's reach (preferably in a secured area) to allow for easy disposal of sharps.
- Do not bend, break, manipulate or manually remove needles before disposal; avoid recapping needles, but if a needle must be recapped, use a single-handed scoop technique.
- Discard used sharps and glass ampoules immediately after use in the location where they were used, disposing of them into a robust sharps container that is leak and puncture resistant. (Use of sealed, puncture and leak-proof sharps containers helps to prevent access to used devices.)
- Seal and replace sharps container.

### **Practical Guidance on Waste Management**

To ensure that waste is dealt with safely:

- Transport and store sharps containers in a secure area before final disposal.
- Close, seal and dispose of sharps containers when the containers are three quarters full.
- Assign responsibility in written policy for monitoring the fill level of sharps containers and replacing them when three quarters full.
- Discard waste that is not categorised as sharp or infectious in appropriate colour-coded bags.
- Ensure that infectious waste bags and sharps containers are closed before they are transported for treatment or disposal.

### **References**

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