

# Needles & Sharps

## Handle with care

### Sharps Injuries

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that about 385,000 sharps-related injuries occur annually among health care workers in hospitals. It has been estimated about half or more of sharps injuries go unreported. Most reported sharps injuries involve nursing staff, but laboratory staff, physicians, housekeepers, and other health care workers are also injured.

A sharps injury is a penetrating stab wound from a needle, scalpel, or other sharp object that may result in exposure to blood or other body fluids. Sharps injuries are typically the result of using dangerous equipment in a fast-paced, stressful, and understaffed environment. These conditions can increase the risk of injury and infection for health care workers.

Health care workers may also incur injuries from improper procedures, such as passing sharps hand-to-hand between team members, placing sharps in a disposal container, or failing to use a safer sharps device. A report from the Exposure Prevention Information Network (EPINet) found that nearly half of all sharps injuries occurred during use of the sharp, and of the nearly 40% of needle injuries which involved a safety designed needle, the majority occurred before activating the safety device. Moreover, the report also showed that many sharps injuries occurred in patient rooms among nurses and operating rooms among surgical team members.



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