



# 5-minute safety talk

## Needle Safety

In our line of work, we encounter situations where we are exposed to needles and open wounds. As a first responder, you need to know how to protect yourself from being exposed to what could be life-threatening diseases. The CDC recommends healthcare workers consider all blood and bodily fluids from all patients as potentially infectious.

Having an exposure control plan helps eliminate or minimize employee exposures and can help you in the event of an exposure. If you become exposed, the exposure control plan includes information to be given to the ED treating physician. This person has the authority, once the exposure is analyzed, to order testing on the source patient. However, there is information you need to remember about exposure safety.

### Needlesticks

If you are poked by a used needle, you could be at risk of becoming infected with a disease like Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, or even HIV. To prevent against exposure, use engineering controls, such as sharps disposal containers and safer needle devices. Alert your partner if you have a sharp in your hand or if one has accidentally fallen on the ground. Proper disposal is very important.

If there is no alternative method of disposal, recapping, bending, or removing the needle is permissible. However, you must use either a mechanical device or a one-handed technique.

### Contaminated Sharps

Contaminated sharps pose a significant risk to rescue workers. Contaminated sharps include needles, scalpels, broken glass, broken capillary tubes, and exposed ends of dental wires, among others. The best way to prevent contamination is to take the necessary steps to ensure your safety. Here are some tips to help you protect against exposure:

- Never reach your hand into a contaminated sharps container.
- Sharps containers must remain upright to keep fluids and contents inside.
- Never shear or break contaminated sharps.
- Close container lids securely before disposing.
- If there is a chance of leakage from the container, use a secondary container that is closable, labeled, or color coded and leak resistant.

### If Exposed

If you are ever in a situation where you are exposed, immediately report the incident to your supervisor and seek medical evaluation. Ask another responder to take over your patient care responsibilities so you can seek necessary medical assistance. You may need to receive the Hepatitis B Immunoglobulin as soon as possible, ideally within 24 hours of exposure. The Hepatitis B vaccine should be administered as soon as possible, as well.

If you are exposed, wash the exposed area with soap and water. If the eyes are exposed, flush them with large amounts of water.

### Continuous Improvement

In any exposure event, you should always follow the exposure control plan. Remember, we need your help to make sure our plan is the best and safest possible. Let us know if there is anything we can be doing better to help you. We need you to help us identify, evaluate, and select engineering controls. If you have ideas, we want to hear them.

Visit [nsc.org/members](http://nsc.org/members) for more safety tips

