

Safe use of sharps

Introduction

Scalpels, microtome blades, cannulas and needles are routinely used in various activities within SGUL both for student training and other processes. Blades and scalpels can cause both horizontal and vertical wounds while needles and cannulas can cause penetrating wounds.

Giving sets are also regarded as sharps due to the pointed section that is on the end of the fluid bag.

It is possible for penetrating injuries to occur while handling glass slides or glass cover slips. Injuries can also occur from watchmaker's forceps which have sharp points and also with dissecting needles.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment must be undertaken before the use of sharps to determine if alternatives can be used, in some cases e.g. practicing cannulation or venepuncture, the dissection of tissue and the sectioning of tissue sharps will need to be used. If sharps are to be used to withdraw blood, the potential for infection should be considered and also the requirement for individuals to be vaccinated.

Training in handling sharps

All individuals must be trained for the activities involving the various sharps. The following individuals can offer training in the use of the sharps in their area.

Yvette Bland Microtomes, slides and cover slips
Institute of Medical and Biomedical Education (2nd floor Jenner Wing)

Maria McGlynn Microtomes, slides and cover slips
Image Resource Facility Jenner Wing Basement corridor 3A

Caroline Nevue Needles, Cannulas and Giving sets
Department of Paramedic Science Jenner Wing Basement Corridors 1 and 3

Jo Tomlinson Scalpels
Institute of Medical and Biomedical Education (dissecting room Jenner Wing Basement)

Disposal of sharps

Disposal of Needles

Sterile needles

You must never attempt to re-sheath an unused needle that has been removed from its packing. It must be disposed of into a yellow sharps box. Many wards within St. George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust use safer needle which have a retractable cover.

Used needles

These must be disposed of as soon as possible and never left lying on work surfaces, trays or benches, many injuries that have led to concern have involved puncture wounds caused by used needles. All items must be disposed of into a yellow sharps box.

Disposal of Cannulas

Sterile cannulas

You must never attempt to re-sheath an unused sterile cannula that has been removed from its packing. It must be disposed of into a yellow sharps box.

Used cannulas

These must be disposed of as soon as possible and never left lying on work surfaces, trays or benches, many injuries that have led to concern have involved puncture wounds caused by used cannula. All items must be disposed of into yellow sharps boxes.

Disposal of microtome blades

These must be disposed of into yellow sharps boxes when they are no longer required.

Disposal of slides or cover slips

Slides or cover slips must be disposed of into yellow sharps boxes when they are no longer required.

Disposal of giving sets

The pointed end must be cut off and disposed of in a yellow sharps box. The fluid bag can be emptied into a sink and then disposed of in an Orange bag if it only contained Saline or Glucose.

Disposal of Scalpel blades

You must never attempt to put a scalpel blade back in its packet even if it has not been used. The blades must be disposed of in a yellow sharps box.

Care must be taken when removing blades from the handle of the scalpel if they have been used. The blades must be disposed of in a yellow sharps box.

Dealing with accidents

Needles

Sterile needles

Encourage the wound to bleed briefly, then wash under the tap with running water and then cover with a plaster. Ask for or contact a first aider to obtain advice if the wound is deep.

Contaminated needles

In the first instance, encourage the wound to bleed briefly, then wash under the tap with running water and then cover with a plaster. Ask for or contact a first aider to obtain advice.

If the needle was contaminated with human or animal blood or tissue either contact Occupational Health on extension 1661 / 1662 / 1663 or visit Accident and Emergency in St. James Wing and let them know what has happened stating whether the contamination was from screened or unscreened human blood or from an infected or un-infected animal. You may need to be accompanied to Accident and Emergency or Occupational Health if the wound is deep

Cannulas

Sterile cannulas

Encourage the wound to bleed briefly, then wash under the tap with running water and then cover with a plaster. Ask or contact a first aider to obtain advice if the wound is deep or bleeding profusely.

Contaminated cannulas

In the first instance, encourage the wound to bleed briefly, then wash under the tap with running water and then cover with a plaster. Ask for or contact a first aider to obtain advice.

If the needle was contaminated with human or animal blood or tissue either contact Occupational Health on extension 1661 / 1662 / 1663 or visit Accident and Emergency in St. James Wing and let them know what has happened stating whether the contamination was from screened or unscreened human blood or from an infected or un-infected animal. You may need to be accompanied to Accident and Emergency.

Microtome blades

Unused blades

Encourage the wound to bleed briefly, then wash under the tap with running water and then cover with a plaster. If the wound appears to be deep or is bleeding profusely ask for a first aider to assist you. You may need to attend Accident and Emergency in St. James Wing.

Used blades

Encourage the wound to bleed briefly, then wash under the tap with running water and then cover with a plaster. If the wound appears to be deep or is bleeding profusely ask for a first aider to assist you.

If the blade was contaminated with human or animal tissue either contact Occupational Health on extension 1661 / 1662 / 1663 or visit Accident and Emergency in St. James Wing and let them know what has happened stating whether the contamination was from screened or unscreened human tissue or from an infected or un-infected animal.

Slides and cover slips

Unused slides and cover slips

Encourage the wound to bleed briefly, then wash under the tap with running water and then cover with a plaster. Check to see that no fragments of glass are left in the wound prior to using a plaster. It would be advisable to ask for a first aider to assist you.

If the wound appears to be deep or is bleeding profusely ask for a first aider to assist you. You may need to attend Accident and Emergency in St. James Wing.

Used slides and cover slips

Encourage the wound to bleed briefly, then wash under the tap with running water and then cover with a plaster. Check to see that no fragments of glass are left in the wound prior to using a plaster. It would be advisable to ask for a first aider to assist you.

If the slide or cover slip was contaminated with human or animal tissue either contact Occupational Health on extension 1661 / 1662 / 1663 or visit Accident and Emergency in St. James Wing and let them know what has happened stating whether the contamination was from screened or unscreened human tissue or from an infected or un-infected animal.

Giving sets

Encourage the wound to bleed briefly, then wash under the tap with running water and then cover with a plaster. If the wound appears to be deep or is bleeding profusely ask for a first aider to assist you.

Scalpels

Sterile scalpels

Encourage the wound to bleed briefly, then wash under the tap with running water and then cover with a plaster. Ask or contact a first aider to obtain advice if the wound is deep.

Contaminated scalpels

In the first instance, encourage the wound to bleed briefly, then wash under the tap with running water and then cover with a plaster. Ask for or contact a first aider to obtain advice.

If the scalpel was contaminated with human or animal blood or tissue either contact Occupational Health on extension 1661 / 1662 / 1663 or visit Accident and Emergency in St. James Wing and let them know what has happened stating whether the contamination was from screened or unscreened human blood or from an infected or un-infected animal. You may need to be accompanied to Accident and Emergency or Occupational Health if the wound is deep

Accident recording

After obtaining treatment you must complete an accident / incident form. The form is available at this [link](#).