

SAFETY ADVICE NOTE

SN-GDSP-2019-249

JUNE 2019

SHARPS – Needlestick Injury

Recently, one of our colleagues was involved in an incident, whereby their hand came into contact with a discarded, used hypodermic needle whilst digging out a trench. Although, the IP was wearing gloves, the needle still penetrated the finger. They attended hospital and were given precautionary treatment.



What is the risk?

The main risk from a sharps injury is the potential exposure to infections such as blood-borne viruses (BBV). This can occur where the injury involves a sharp that is contaminated with blood or a bodily fluid.

The blood-borne viruses of most concern are:

- Hepatitis B (HBV)
- Hepatitis C (HCV)
- Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

What you need to know

What is a sharps injury?

A sharps injury is an incident, which causes a needle or other such medical instruments to penetrate the skin by cutting or pricking.

How can you help prevent such an injury?

- Dynamically risk assess your work area, and that of your colleagues, at all times
- When planning a job, consider risk factors such as areas where drug misuse is known

What to do if you receive a sharps injury

If you suffer an injury from a sharp which may be contaminated:

- Encourage the wound to gently bleed, ideally holding it under running water
- Wash the wound using running water and plenty of soap
- Don't scrub the wound whilst you are washing it
- Don't suck the wound
- Dry the wound and cover it with a waterproof plaster or dressing
- Seek urgent medical advice as effective prophylaxis (medicines to help fight infection) are available
- Report the injury to your employer and the Balfour Beatty Helpline 0800 121 4444