



RCSI

Safe Handling of Sharps & Needlesticks Procedure

RCSI endeavours to protect staff, students & others, so far as is reasonably practicable, from the risks arising from contact with needles, sharps and body fluids coming from the careless or malicious disposal of needles or any other reason. This procedure outlines the prevention measures and the actions necessary in the event of such an injury.

This procedure applies to all staff, students, contractors and visitors. All needles, sharps and body fluids will be treated as being potentially contaminated and the procedures documented in here will be followed thoroughly on each occasion. RCSI users who clean, service, maintain, work or study in areas used by the general public and those who work in laboratories may also be at risk.

DEFINITIONS

Needle stick injury: A penetrating stab wound from a needle or syringe that may result in exposure to blood or other body fluids.

Sharps: Includes scissors, razors, scalpels, broken glassware, or other items stained by blood or other body fluids

Body Fluid Exposure: Splashes of blood or other body fluids into the eyes, nose or mouth. Exposure of non-intact skin (e.g. open wounds, cuts, abrasions) to blood or other body fluids

Blood-borne viruses: are able to spread in the blood. Several types of hepatitis are caused by blood-borne viruses: Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and also HIV. This means that you can become exposed to these viruses (and the infections they cause) if you come into direct contact with blood that is infected with one of these viruses.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Managers / PI's

- Ensure that this procedure (and the [Risk Assessment](#)(s) for the tasks that involve sharps and needlestick use) is communicated to all your staff and Students at induction to lab and at regular intervals during team meetings etc.
- Determine whether any operations within your area of responsibility present a risk of infection arising from exposure to needles/sharps/body fluids, to any staff or students and include this in the risk assessment for the task.
- Ensure that staff and students are also provided with sufficient training to carry out their work safely.
- Ensure to supply safe disposal of sharps boxes in specific work s area where this equipment is used.
- Follow the Emergency Procedures below in the event of assisting an injured person and [report injury and incidents](#) to the Health & Safety Office.

Health & Safety Office:

- Provide information, guidance and training to staff and students on any matter relating to needle-stick/sharp injuries, as and when relevant and requested to do so.
- Investigate all injuries and incidents that occur and if necessary advise on control measures to be implemented to prevent injury / incident from occurring again.
- Report injuries/incidents to the Health and Safety Authority, where necessary.

All Staff and Students

- Ensure you are aware of and understand this procedure.
- If you discover an issues regarding needles/sharps/body fluids, contact RCSI Security team (SSG- 01 402 2219 / Beaumont 01 809 3700) who can help direct your concern to relevant department.
- Do not attempt to remove the needle/sharp/body fluid unless trained and equipped with corrects tools to do so.
- If exposed to a needle stick injury, see emergency procedure below and report injury to Supervisor when you can / safe to do so.
- While at work, cover cuts and abrasions with a suitable dressing.
- Before taking food, drink or smoking, always wash hands thoroughly.



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GUIDELINES FOR DISPOSAL OF NEEDLES/SHARPS

1. Assess and identify location/presence of the sharp/needle.
2. Cover all cuts or open wounds and put on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)* and obtain equipment** required.
3. Place the sharps container as close as possible to the sharp/needle and open it. Do not hold the sharps container or ask another person to hold it while you are disposing of the object.
4. Using tongs/litter picker, to pick up the object and place it in the sharps container.
5. Keep the sharp end of the needle/sharp facing away from you at all times.
6. Do not attempt to re-cap any needles. The cap can be disposed of separately.
7. Close and seal the container, hold it by the handle when carrying and store it in the designated location for collection.
8. Disinfect area and work equipment with bleach solution**.
9. Remove gloves carefully and dispose as clinical waste.
10. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water.

* PPE may include disposable gloves (latex, nitrile or vinyl), thick-soled footwear and safety goggles.

**Other equipment may include tongs/litter picker, sharps container, and bleach solution (1 part bleach to 10 parts water).

GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH SPILLAGES OF BLOOD/BODY FLUID

1. Restrict access to the spillage area.
2. Cover all cuts or open wounds and put on disposal glove. Use additional PPE if needed.
3. Get the spill kit and use the absorbent pads to soak up most of the spill, then place in disposal bag provided in the spill kit.
4. Use another absorbent pad and clean the affected area thoroughly with an appropriate bleach solution, then place pads in same disposal bag.
5. Tag disposal bag correctly and put in designated area for collection.
6. Inform Supervisor / order replacement supplies for spill kit.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FOR ALL RCSI PERSONNAL & CONTRACTORS

Emergency First-Aid Action in the event of exposure to needle stick/sharps injury & exposure to blood/body fluid

- If support required, contact RCSI Security to get first aid support / arrange transport for the injured person to go immediately to GP or A&E, if required.
- If you are assisting an injured person, put on gloves.
- For punctured or non-intact skin, encourage the wound to bleed by squeezing skin together.
- Do not suck, scrub or suction the wound.
- Wash the area well with soap and water.
- Cover wound with a dry sterile dressing.

- Splashes to the nose or mouth should be flushed with water.

- Splashes to the eyes should be irrigated with sterile eye wash (or if none available with tap water). If contact lenses are worn, irrigate the eyes before and after removal of the lenses.

- Contaminated tissues, dressings, gloves etc. should be treated as clinical waste and disposed of appropriately.

- The injured person's Supervisor should be notified without delay and an [injury report form](#) submitted the Health & Safety Office when possible / within 24hours if injury.



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Post-incident support

- All injuries / occurrences will be treated sensitively and the confidentiality.
- Affected individuals will be given access to injury report and investigation if requested.
- The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is available to all RCSI Staff & Students. Freephone 1800 903 542 or WhatsApp 00353 87 3690010
- The Student Counselling service is available to all students. Further details on [Moodle](#).