

SAFE PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH DISCARDED SYRINGES

Introduction

Nowadays, an increasing number of individuals (staff and pupils) are more likely to come into contact with discarded hypodermic needles and syringes (sharps) which are classed as clinical waste. Some groups of staff are more at risk as a consequence of the type of job they do. This guidance is intended to clarify the College's recommendations for safely dealing with discarded needles and syringes found on or off the premises by staff or others.

Some pupils need to have medication administered using hypodermic needles whilst at college. In such circumstances, the college should will have a detailed written procedure for the safe storage, handling and disposal of contaminated sharps.

What are the hazards?

Discarded sharps can present a risk of needle stick injury. The extent of infection from such an injury is largely dependent on how the needle has been used and by whom.

Who is at risk?

Any staff whose job involves site maintenance/cleaning activities are most likely to be at risk. Litter picking, emptying litter bins and general grounds maintenance work are all tasks where discarded syringes may be discovered. Staff should take precautions to reduce the risk of accidentally coming into contact with discarded sharps. Occasionally, pupils or other members of the public may find a needle that has been discarded on or off college site.

What action should I take if I find a discarded needle or one is reported to me?

If you discover a needle or syringe:

- Do not touch it with your bare hands,
- Use a dustpan and brush or other suitable implement to place it in a suitable container.
- Children must be kept away from the affected area until the sharp has been removed. Pupils must be told to report any such findings to a member of staff and discouraged from interfering with the item.

What is the correct method of storing needles and syringes?

Used syringes and needles must be stored in an approved sharps box. Suitable sharps containers are manufactured from a puncture proof material and have the appropriate hazard warning labels attached. They also have a sealed lid to prevent sharps from being removed. Glass jars or metal tins/boxes should no be used for this purpose. Keep the sharps box in an area which is only accessible to staff.

How do we dispose of sharps boxes?

The college will make arrangements for the box to be collected. Boxes are designed for incineration. Under no circumstances must they be emptied and returned for reuse in school.

What action should we take in the event of a needle stick injury?

If an injury occurs:

- Wash the affected area thoroughly using clean water and soap for at least five minutes,
- Encourage the wound to bleed by gently squeezing,
- Do not suck the wound.
- Injuries to staff should be reported immediately to the head teacher who should contact the Occupational Health Unit (01785 276284) for advice about immunisation.
- Injuries to pupils should be reported immediately to the head teacher. The head teacher should contact the parents or other responsible adult and advise that the child be taken immediately to their own doctor or accident and emergency unit to seek advice about immunisation.
- Principals must report all accidents involving exposure to discarded syringes and needles to the LEA on the standard accident report form.