

## Needlesticks are Costly

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Needlestick injuries not only hurt and are dangerous, they cost money. It is estimated that 384,000 health care workers sustain a needlestick injury every year.

The annual cost associated with needlestick injuries is 258 million dollars. The follow up costs, if patient is not high risk, is \$3,000 per injury. It's even more if the patient is high risk.

In 2007 the New England Journal of Medicine stated that 99% of all surgical residents had at least one injury during their final year of training. 53% of those injuries involved high risk.

### **Sharp-Tip Needles**

Sharp-tip needles are the leading source of penetrating injuries to the skin for surgical personnel. 51-77% of sharps injuries are caused by suture needles. Most suture needles injuries frequently occur during the suturing of muscle

However, blunt suture needles are sharp enough to pierce muscle, but not sharp enough to pierce the skin.

These pathogens include, but are not limited to:

- The hepatitis b virus (HBV),
- The hepatitis C virus (HCV), and
- The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Your chances of contracting these bloodborne pathogens are:

- 1 in 5 Hepatitis B if you're not vaccinated,
- 1 in 50 for Hepatitis C, and
- 1 in 300 for HIV.

Sharp suture needles are most often the culprit of percutaneous injuries.

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## **Where do you start in order to protect yourself?**

1. The first priority is to eliminate and reduce the use of needles and other sharps wherever possible.
2. The next priority is to isolate the hazards and thereby protect otherwise exposed sharps, through the use of engineering controls.
3. Finally, regardless of whether an engineering control is available, safe work practices are always necessary to reduce sharps hazards in the workplace.

## **What to do if you are exposed**

If you are exposed to human blood or Other Potentially Infectious Materials (OPIM):

- Wash affected areas with soap and water
- Flush mucous membranes with water
- Notify your supervisor immediately
- Ensure that any spilled material is contained

Consult your supervisor and fill out the required [Incident Report Form](#).

## **After the Exposure**

After a report of an exposure incident, a potentially exposed employee will be offered at no cost:

- A confidential medical exam
- Counseling
- Blood testing/analysis
- A confidential reply from the attending healthcare professional within 15 days