



Getting the full benefits of safety-engineered medical sharps

A nurse contracted hepatitis C after her finger was punctured by a contaminated needle while assisting a physician to set up an IV catheter. The device was a safety-engineered needle. This incident highlights that, in addition to the use of safety-engineered medical sharps (SEMDs), required since 2008, other measures must also be taken to minimize the risk of injury from sharps.

Employers/Supervisors must ensure that

- SEMDs are used for medical procedures where they are *commercially available* and their use is *clinically appropriate*¹
- Safe work procedures are implemented based on manufacturers' instructions
- Workers receive appropriate training on safe work procedures and use of SEMDs
- Workers are supervised to ensure proper use and disposal of SEMDs



Workers must

- Follow safe work procedures and use SEMDs according to manufacturers' instructions
- Establish clear communication when working with another person
- Activate the safety feature on SEMDs immediately after use
- Dispose of SEMDs immediately after activation
- Report when they are injured during a procedure and any failures with SEMDs

Incidents

When a worker suffers a needlestick injury, they must be referred for medical assessment (e.g., to their local emergency room within two hours of injury).

All incidents must be investigated to determine what changes can be implemented to prevent incidents from being repeated.

Device failures should be reported to the device manufacturer and to Health Canada.

WorkSafeBC resources

Controlling Exposure: Protecting Workers from Infectious Disease (book) and *Stuck by a needle?* (poster) can be found at www.WorkSafeBC.com.

¹ For regulatory requirements related to infectious disease, see Sections 6.33–6.40 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.