

# STONEHILL COLLEGE Sharps Precautions

The intent of this standard operating procedure (SOP) is to describe methods to prevent injury from sharps. This SOP is intended for use by all personnel working with animals, their products, or items contaminated with animal products. This SOP is approved by the Stonehill College Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). Any exemption must be approved by the IACUC prior to its application.

## **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this SOP is to describe methods to prevent:

- a. physical injury
- b. human exposure to hazardous chemical or biological substances
- c. unauthorized use of sharps
- d. improper disposal of regulated medical waste

**NOTE:** This is a directive for all personnel working with animals, their products, or items contaminated with animal products. Personnel include employees, animal handlers, researchers and their staff, facility supervisors and their staff, students, volunteers, and visiting academics.

## **2. Materials**

Biohazard sharps container

## **3. Procedures**

- a. Issue hypodermic syringes and needles to authorized personnel only. They are to be used only for teaching, research, and/or clinical practice.
- b. Store any stocks of hypodermic syringes and needles in a secure place (e.g., locked drawer, cabinet, or room) with controlled access. Hypodermic syringes and needles not in reserve, not in main stocks, and not in use must also be stored under suitable locked protection. A log of purchases, stocks on hand, and distribution must be kept.
- c. Work with only one uncapped hypodermic needle at a time. Keep uncapped needles and other sharps in view.
  - i. DO NOT place a needle cap in your mouth in order to remove the cap.
  - ii. DO NOT leave sharps unattended.
- d. Whenever possible, place a biohazard sharps container within an arm's reach of the area where sharps are used. Position the biohazard sharps container low enough in the work area so that you can readily visualize the opening.

**STONEHILL  
COLLEGE  
Sharps Precautions**

Biohazard sharps containers are available for purchase from laboratory supply companies (e.g., Fisher, VWR, etc.).

e. Immediately dispose of a used hypodermic syringe and needle, as a unit, directly into a sharps container, without any further manipulation. Avoid bending, breaking, shearing, or removing needles from syringes. Likewise, dispose of any broken glassware contaminated with biohazardous materials directly into a biohazard sharps container. Store reusable sharps to prevent accidental or unintentional contact (e.g., in a puncture-resistant container). If contaminated with biohazardous materials, reusable sharps should be stored in disinfectant solution until processed.

i. Sharps must not be disposed of in the regular trash.

ii. If vacutainers are to be reused, secure the hub of the needle in a sharps container and unscrew it directly into the container.

f. Avoid recapping needles whenever possible. Recapping of needles causes more injuries than it prevents. However, if it is absolutely necessary to recap needles, for example, as part of a medical procedure or protocol, or if a sharps container is not available, you must use either

i. a mechanical device such as forceps to replace the cap on the needle, or

ii. a one-handed “scoop” technique (defined in the appendix). Additionally, you must document in your laboratory SOPs or safety manual when recapping is acceptable and what method you will use.

iii. Transport any recapped needles in secondary containers to prevent accidental inoculation.

g. Avoid handling any broken, contaminated glassware directly by hand, even if wearing gloves. Use a device such as tongs, forceps, brush and dustpan, or even two pieces of cardboard.

h. Discard biohazard sharps containers when they are 3/4 full. Secure the containers to prevent leakage, punctures, and spillage during transport. Sharps containers are Regulated Medical Waste (RMW) and must be disposed of through the Stonehill Hazardous Waste Program. Within the College, generators must self-transport RMW waste to the waste management area; elsewhere, pickup is by Environmental Health & Safety.

i. Sharps containers must not enter the regular solid waste stream.

**STONEHILL**  
**COLLEGE**  
**Sharps Precautions**

- ii. DO NOT overfill biohazard sharps containers.
- iii. DO NOT force a sharps item into a container, or retrieve a discarded item.

#### **4. Safety**

If you are injured by a sharp or a contaminated sharp:

- a. Flush the wound with antiseptic soap and water for several minutes (refer to SOP "Animal Related Injury")
- b. Notify your supervisor
- c. Contact the Health Center 5-1307, and
- d. File a Stonehill College Accident Report Form

#### **5. References**

- Stonehill Occupational Health and Safety webpage.
- Stonehill College Animal Related Injury SOP
- Stonehill College Accident Form

#### **7. Appendix**

- a. Sharps: items capable of causing percutaneous wounds or breaks in the skin. Sharps used in animal or human patient care, biomedical research, or glass items in contact with infectious agents, are Regulated Medical Waste.

Examples include:

- i. Hypodermic needles, hypodermic syringes with attached needle (regardless of use), surgical needles, Pasteur pipettes, and scalpels.
  - ii. Capillary pipettes, razor blades, and broken glassware contaminated with infectious agents. Contaminated glass slides and cover slips are included.
- b. Biohazard Sharps Container: rigid, leak proof, puncture resistant container that is labeled with the universal biohazard symbol or the word "biohazard".
  - c. One-handed "Scoop" Technique: a one-handed technique for recapping a hypodermic needle. With one hand, hold the syringe with attached needle or the needle hub alone

**STONEHILL**  
**COLLEGE**  
**Sharps Precautions**

(when unattached) and scoop or slide the cap, which is lying on a horizontal surface, onto the needle's sharp end. Once the point of the needle is covered, you can tighten the cap by

- i. pushing against an object, or
- ii. pulling the base of the needle cap onto the hub of the needle with the same hand holding the syringe.

**Please post this SOP in areas where sharps are used.**