



## **Needle Recapping and Handling**

Recapping needles is extremely dangerous because it can result in the accidental puncture of the fingers or hand and potentially expose individuals to hazardous chemicals, drugs or infectious biological agents.

Why is Recapping Dangerous?

- The person handling the needle may miss the plastic cap or may pierce the end of the cap puncturing the finger or hand.
- The cap may not be secure and may fall off exposing the finger or hand to the needle
- The person may be stuck when taking the needle apart from the syringe assembly.

## **Protecting Yourself**

You can protect yourself by planning ahead for safe handling and disposal of needles without recapping. Standard needles should not be left out in work areas; they should be used and then immediately disposed in approved sharps containers without recapping. However, if it is essential that a needle be recapped for safe transport, care should be taken to replace the protective cap. The use of a mechanical device, such as tongs or forceps, or the one-handed scoop method to facilitate safe recapping is strongly recommended. Secondary containers must be used to transport sharps. In addition, there needs to be written justification, instructions and training for any procedures that involves the recapping of needles

Environment, Health & Safety (EHS) has a [Needle Recapping and Handling Standard Operating Procedure](#) that can be downloaded and posted in the lab for reference.

## **Proper Disposal**

Needles and sharps are never to be discarded directly into the general waste stream or biohazard trash bags. Dispose of sharps directly, without manipulation, in an approved sharps disposal container. Approved sharps containers must be placed in areas where sharps may be utilized. The containers must be labeled with the date that waste accumulation begins. Sharps containers must be properly closed and sealed prior to disposal, and are disposed through EHS (763-4568) or in areas with vendor provided biohazard bins lined with red bags within 60 days of the start accumulation date.

## **Best Practices**

**Know the risks** – Are you using sharps while working with human materials, viral vectors, cancer cells, pathogens, recombinant/synthetic nucleic acids, or biological toxins? If the answer is yes, an accidental injury will have increased risk. Take time to be safe.

**Full view** - Keep all sharps in full view at all times and if possible, use only one at a time.

**Use a tube** - Rather than recapping the needle or leaving a scalpel blade exposed, place it in a clean conical tube if you need to set it down.

**Within Reach** - Maintain sharps disposal containers within reach.

**Safety Engineered Sharps** – Limit the use of sharps to when no other alternatives are available. If sharps must be used, use those that have built-in safety features like retractable needles or sheaths that cover the needle or scalpel when you're done.

**Safe transport** – Use secondary containers to transport sharps. A sealed plastic container