

Sharps Injuries and Restaurant Workers

Many people with diabetes need to check their blood sugars frequently. Persons with diabetes or other medical problems may need to inject themselves with medications at regular intervals, including times when the person is eating out.

People who test their blood with lancets or inject themselves using a syringe and needle should take the used lancet or needle home with them to properly dispose it.

However, through carelessness or forgetfulness, a person may leave the sharp object on a table, plate, mixed with linen, in the bathroom, or in a trashcan. This can allow restaurant workers or other patrons to become accidentally stuck with the used object and potentially exposed to blood-borne pathogens.

Blood-borne pathogens include hepatitis B virus, hepatitis C virus and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Persons who get exposed to someone's blood after getting stuck with a used lancet or needle will need to undergo testing throughout a year to make sure they have not contracted an infection.



Ways for Food-Service Workers to Decrease the Risk of a Sharps Injury

1. If a restaurant worker sees a needle or lancet, he/she should report it immediately to a supervisor or manager.
2. Assume all needles or lancets are contaminated with blood.
3. Never pick up a used needle or lancet with hands. Use tongs or a brush/broom to sweep the lancet or needle into a dustpan.
4. Never throw the lancet or needle directly into the trash. Place it inside a hard-sided plastic bottle (like a detergent bottle or bleach bottle), seal the lid, and then throw it into the trash.
5. Never use your hand or foot to compress trash in the container.
6. When cleaning a table, pick up the napkin by a corner to make sure anything hidden in it falls out onto the table. If a needle or lancet falls out, follow steps 1-4.
7. If someone gets stuck with a lancet or needle:
 - a. Wash area immediately with soap and water; do not squeeze puncture site.
 - b. Notify the supervisor or manager immediately.
 - c. Follow the restaurant's procedure for reporting and/or documenting the injury.
 - d. Go right away to an emergency department or urgent care center for evaluation.
 - e. Keep all appointments for follow-up testing or treatment.