

Sharps are items that can easily puncture the skin. Examples include needles, razor blades, scalpel blades, Pasteur pipettes, microscope slides, and cover slips. All sharps must be handled and disposed in a manner that protects you and others from exposure and possible injury.

General Precautions:

- Substitute plastic-ware for glass whenever possible. Routinely inspect glassware and remove from service items that are damaged, starred, cracked or chipped. Dispose in the box marked “Broken Lab Glassware.” Seal the box and carry out to the Dumpster when full.
- Make sure lighting is adequate and the work space is not crowded. If it is, take a few minutes to clear the area before working with sharps.
- Be alert at all times when handling sharps. Don’t look away or otherwise become distracted when handling a sharp object.
- Use rounded or blunt end devices when practicable.
- Keep sharp tools sharp and use the right tool for the task.
- Use cut-resistant gloves if practicable. In some cases, heavy rubber gloves (i.e. when washing glassware) or double-gloving with surgical gloves (when dexterity is important) may be appropriate.
- Do not handle sharp objects (i.e. broken glass) with bare or even gloved hands. Use engineering controls such as tongs or a dust pan and broom instead.
- Do not leave unprotected sharps on bench tops or loose in drawers. Use protective shields, cases, Styrofoam blocks, tube holders, etc.
- Protect the sharp when passing from one person to another. If not feasible, use verbal communication when passing.
- Use needle syringes only when absolutely necessary. If a needle syringe is absolutely necessary to the procedure, use a syringe that automatically re-sheathes the needle.
- Do not try to recap the needle of a syringe. An accidental puncture might occur. If recapping is absolutely necessary, use the one-handed technique
- Used needles must not be bent, sheared, broken, recapped, removed from disposable syringes, or otherwise manipulated by hand before disposal.
- Keep a sharps disposal container accessible in the immediate work area and put used sharps directly into the sharps container. Do not lay used sharps on the bench top.
- Do not overfill the sharps container. Leave room to seal the lid properly.
- Do not try to retrieve items from sharps disposal containers.
- Sharps containers are managed as Rhode Island Regulated Medical Waste. When the container is full, dispose in a biohazard waste box or contact EHS for pick-up. Do not store sharps containers in the chemical hazardous waste accumulation area (SAA).