



Sharps injury

If you pierce or puncture your skin with a used medical sharp (this could be a needle, scalpel or glass from broken equipment), you must follow this first aid advice immediately:

- encourage the wound to bleed, ideally by holding it under running water.
- wash the wound using warm running water and soap.
- don't scrub the wound while you're washing it.
- don't suck the wound.
- dry the wound and cover it with a waterproof plaster or dressing.

You should also seek immediate medical advice **within one hour** by going to your nearest A&E department. The reason for this is that once someone has used a needle or sharp, viruses in their blood such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C or HIV may contaminate it. The risk of infection is low; however you will need to be assessed to rule this out.

Assessing your injury

The healthcare professional treating you will assess the risks to your health and ask about your injury – for example, how and when it happened, or who had

used the needle. Samples of your blood may need to be tested for hepatitis B and C or HIV.

If the other person gives their consent, your healthcare professional may also arrange to test samples of the blood on the sharp contaminant. Healthcare workers must safely dispose of the sharp source.

Will I need any treatment?

If your healthcare professional thinks you are at a low risk of infection, you may not need any treatment. If there's a higher risk of infection, you may need:

- antibiotic treatment, for example if you have cellulitis (infection of the skin).
- a tetanus vaccine.
- vaccination against hepatitis B.
- treatment to prevent HIV.

What happens next?

The injury will need to be documented by our healthcare staff and a follow-up appointment arranged with your GP. A letter will be sent informing your GP of the incident, action taken and the recommended follow-up. Please contact the infection control team on 020 7253 3411 (ext. 2539), who will be able to direct you to services which can provide further support.

