

**LEEDS TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS TRUST
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE**

**Needlestick and Sharps Injuries
Advice for Healthcare students on clinical placements**

Injuries ('needlesticks') can result from needles and other sharps e.g. scalpels used in medical procedures. Used sharps can transmit infections from the patient, in particular the blood-borne viruses HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C. These infections can also be transmitted by body fluid splashes on to mucosal surfaces (e.g. eyes or mouth) or on to broken skin. The risk from such incidents is reduced by appropriate protective clothing, for example wearing gloves for phlebotomy. Prevention, by using needle safe devices and careful disposal of sharps is better still!

However, these incidents do happen and are frightening and stressful events. Each clinical placement should have local guidance/policy in place on who to contact for help following such an incident - make sure you know where to find this when you start each new placement.

The key actions to take are listed below:

1. First aid

- Encourage the wound to bleed (don't suck it!)
- Wash the wound using running water and soap
- Dry the wound and cover with a waterproof plaster or dressing
- Irrigate the site of a mucosal splash

2. Report the incident to your supervisor or person in charge (e.g. ward sister)

3. Seek urgent medical advice even out-of-hours - if treatment is needed it should be started as quickly as possible.

Telephone the **Occupational Health** Department (if available on site).

Other sources of help and advice:

Infectious Diseases Department, St James's University Hospital, Leeds
Contact numbers: office (working hours) 0113 206 6614, duty registrar (24 hours) via switchboard 0113 243 2799, ward (24 hours) 0113 206 9120

Occupational Health Service, Leeds Teaching Hospitals (working hours)
Contact number 0113 206 5228

Once the urgent situation has been dealt with please contact the Occupational Health Service at Leeds Teaching Hospitals for advice.