

Frequently Asked Questions about...

Safe Injection Practices

Q. What are safe injection practices?

A. Safe injection practices are a set of infection prevention measures intended to prevent transmission of infectious diseases between one patient and another or between a patient and a care provider, and to prevent injuries such as needle sticks. Because we do not always know if a person has an infectious disease, safe injection practices are a part of standard precautions to assure that injections are performed in a safe and healthy way for the patient, care provider, and community. A safe injection does not harm the recipient, does not expose the care provider to any avoidable risks, and does not result in waste that is dangerous for the community.

Q. What kinds of infections can occur because of unsafe injection practices?

A. Bloodborne pathogens such as hepatitis B and hepatitis C can be spread through unsafe injection practices. Outbreaks of these diseases have occurred as a result of contamination of multiple dose vials of medication or containers of IV fluid, as well as misuse of blood glucose monitoring devices.

Q. What is included in safe injection practices?

A. Safe injection practices include:

- Use aseptic technique to prevent contamination of sterile injection equipment.
- Do not administer medications from a single syringe to multiple patients. Changing the needle is **not** sufficient.
- Use fluid infusion and administration sets (i.e., intravenous bags, tubing, and connectors) for one patient only and discard immediately after use.
- Use single-dose vials for injectible medications whenever possible.
- If multi-dose vials must be used, use and store them in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Q. What about the use of blood glucose monitoring devices?

A. Safe injection practices apply to the use of blood glucose monitoring devices. See other sections of this infection prevention toolkit for more information.

Q. Why are the safe use and disposal of needles and other sharp instruments not included as a part of safe injection practices?

A. Recommendations for the safe use and disposal of needles and other sharp objects have been developed and widely distributed for a number of years. Proper use of needles prevents injuries and exposure to blood and body fluids, and in turn, exposure to bloodborne pathogens and infectious diseases. Care to prevent injury from needles should always accompany safe injection practices.

Q. How can needle sticks and sharps injuries be prevented?

A. Used needles (e.g., from injections or IV equipment) should always be discarded directly into a sharps container. Needles should never be recapped, and should never be left – even briefly – on a bedside table or anywhere else where they could accidentally be picked up with trash or used linen. Sharps containers should be hard plastic, have a working lid that prevents retrieval of the discarded needles and be disposed of as medical waste. Lancets should be discarded into appropriate sharps containers.

Contact your local health department if you have additional questions about safe injection practices.