

## **Ontario Nurses' Association Resource Document**

### **Risk of Injury**

The highest risk for pathogen transmission is from hollow-bore, blood-filled needles. Specific features make some devices more dangerous:

- Hollow-bore needles
- Needle devices that must be taken apart or manipulated by the health care worker
- Devices that retain an exposed needle after use
- Needles that are attached to tubing

### **Risk of disease**

Sharps injuries can expose workers to a number of bloodborne pathogens that can cause serious or fatal infections. The bloodborne pathogens that post the greatest health risk are:

- Hepatitis B virus (HBV)
- Hepatitis C virus (HCV)
- Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)

HBV vaccination has proven highly effective in preventing infection. It is recommended for all health care workers. However, no vaccine exists to prevent HCV or HIV infection. Some risk factors can increase the risk of HIV transmission.

### **Work Practices**

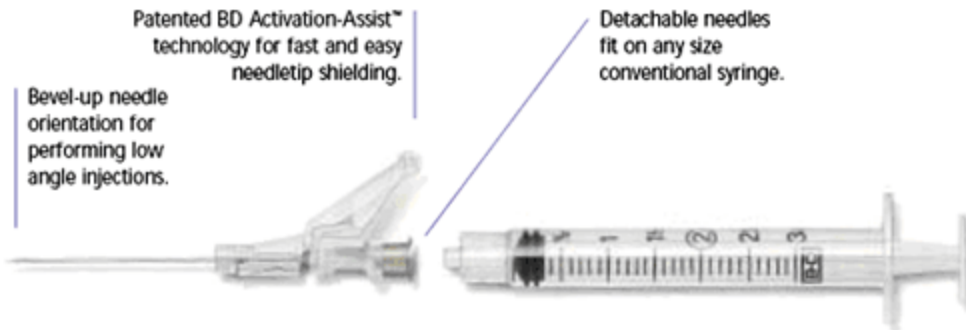
Engineering controls eliminate hazards at the source and are the best and most effective approach to occupational health and safety. Safety engineered and medical sharps must be the primary source of eliminating and reducing sharps related injuries.

Safety engineered medical devices afford the worker superior protection because the safety features/technologies are designed and incorporated into the device.

### **Safety Engineered Needles**

These images are examples of what safety engineered needles look like.

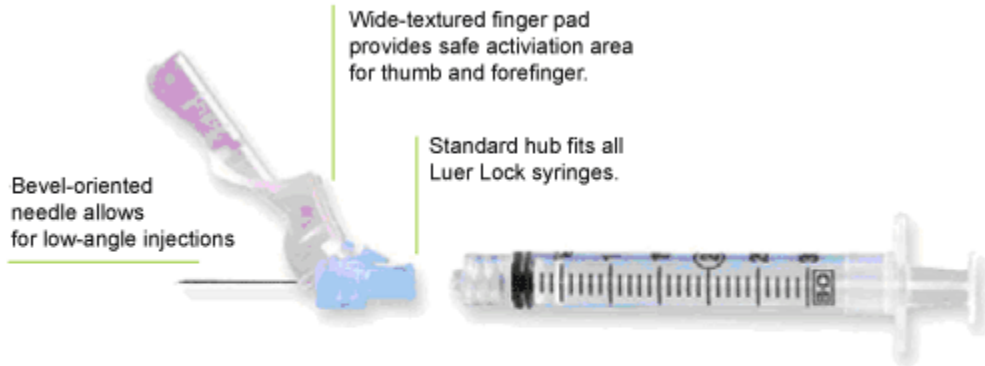
## PRIOR TO ACTIVATION



## AFTER ACTIVATION



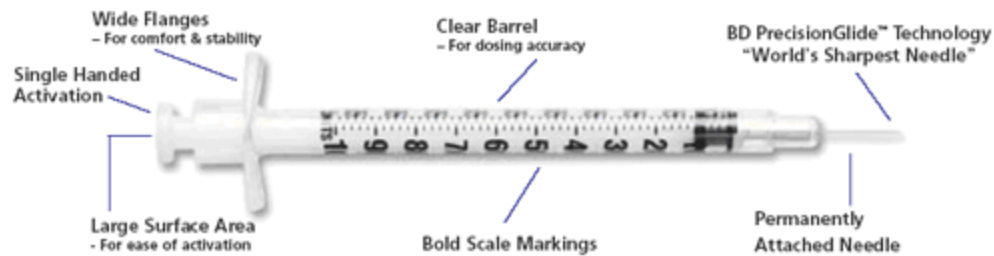
## PRIOR TO ACTIVATION



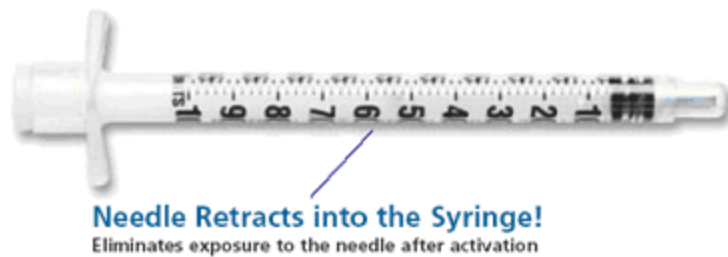
## AFTER ACTIVATION



## PRIOR TO ACTIVATION



## AFTER ACTIVATION



### If you sustain an injury:

- wash the wound with soap and water
- alert your supervisor
- report immediately to employee health or emergency room (ER)
- ensure that you follow up the incident with your family physician
- get post-exposure prophylaxis within two hours of the exposure (if appropriate)
- document the incident i.e. in a sharps injury log
- get follow-up testing and counseling
- file a workers' compensation report
- notify your Joint Health & Safety Committee
- notify your Bargaining Unit/Local/Labour Relations Officer

### What You Should Do

- Insist on safety-engineered devices in your workplace. Exercise your legal rights under the *Occupational Health & Safety Act* when necessary.
- Always activate the safety feature of any device you are using. Safety-engineered devices eliminate the unnecessary risk of recapping.
- Plan for the safe handling and disposal of sharps before using them.
- Promptly dispose of used sharps in appropriate sharps disposal containers.
- Tell your supervisor, employer and Joint Health & Safety Committee about any needlestick/sharps hazards.
- Report all needlestick and sharps-related injuries promptly to ensure you receive appropriate care.
- Participate in training related to infection prevention.

- Get a hepatitis B vaccination
- Exercise your legal rights to health & safety protection, including the right to refuse unsafe work where possible.

*Document created on May 8, 2013*