

## Prevention and control of healthcare-associated infections in primary and community care

Issued: March 2012

**NICE clinical guideline 139**

[www.nice.org.uk/cg139](http://www.nice.org.uk/cg139)

### 1.1.4 Safe use and disposal of sharps

- 1.1.4.1 Sharps should<sup>[11]</sup> not be passed directly from hand to hand, and handling should be kept to a minimum. **[2003, amended 2012]**
- 1.1.4.2. Used needles:
  - must not be bent or broken before disposal
  - must not be recapped.
  - In dentistry, if recapping or disassembly is unavoidable, a risk assessment must be undertaken and appropriate safety devices should be used. **[new 2012]**
- 1.1.4.3 Used sharps must be discarded immediately by the person generating the sharps waste into a sharps container conforming to current standards<sup>[12]</sup> **[new 2012]**
- 1.1.4.4. Sharps containers:
  - must<sup>[10]</sup> be located in a safe position that avoids spillage, is at a height that allows the safe disposal of sharps, is away from public access areas and is out of the reach of children
  - must not<sup>[10]</sup> be used for any other purpose than the disposal of sharps
  - must not<sup>[10]</sup> be filled above the fill line
  - must<sup>[10]</sup> be disposed of when the fill line is reached
  - should be temporarily closed when not in use
  - should be disposed of every 3 months even if not full, by the licensed route in accordance with local policy. **[new 2012]**
- 1.1.4.5 Use sharps safety devices if a risk assessment has indicated that they will provide safer systems of working for healthcare workers, carers and patients. **[new 2012]**
- 1.1.4.6 Train and assess all users in the correct use and disposal of sharps and sharps safety devices. **[new 2012]**

### 1.1.5 Waste disposal

- 1.1.5.1 Healthcare waste must be segregated immediately by the person generating the waste into appropriate colour-coded storage or waste disposal bags or containers defined as being compliant with current national legislation<sup>[10]</sup> and local policies. **[new 2012]**
- 1.1.5.2 Healthcare waste must be labelled, stored, transported and disposed of in accordance with current national legislation<sup>[10]</sup> and local policies. **[new 2012]**
- 1.1.5.3 Educate patients and carers about the correct handling, storage and disposal of healthcare waste. **[new 2012]**