



SURF LIFE SAVING AUSTRALIA POLICY STATEMENT SHARPS POLICY

POLICY
NUMBER
1.14
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Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to raise the awareness of sharps as an important aspect of beach safety management.

Background

The issue of sharps on beaches has from time to time created major media and public concern. The management of this potential hazard should have an education component and a prevention and response component.

Management

There are two aspects to sharps management:

1. Education
2. Prevention and response

Education

Education should be provided to the community to contain the problem and for staff to respond appropriately.

- Community education on the safe use and disposal of syringes in addition to education based on general drug awareness issues.
- Staff training on the handling and disposal of sharps.

Prevention and Response

- Provision of sharps disposal containers.
- Beach cleaning services (identification and removal of sharps).
- Access to portable sharps containers and safe handling equipment.
- First aid training in general hygiene requirements and treatment of needle stick injuries.

Needlestick Injury

In the event of any needlestick injury the appropriate response is to:

- Take action to prevent any further injuries.
- Apply first aid.
- Seek medical aid.
- Report the injury.
- Consider the need for counselling of the injured person.

In Australia it is not an offence to possess sterile needles and syringes. However it is an offence to dispose of injecting equipment in an unsafe manner.

Safe Disposal

All used needles and syringes should be placed immediately after use in a properly sealed, rigid walled, puncture proof container and disposed of in your nearest public sharps disposal bin.

Unsafe Disposal and Community Concerns

Most needles and syringes are disposed of safely and appropriately. However there are some occasions when they are not and these occasions continue to cause public concern. To date there have been no documented accounts, worldwide, of any person acquiring Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or HIV from a needle stick injury sustained in a communal or public setting.

What to do if you Find an Unsafely Discarded Needle and Syringe

If you find a needle and syringe:

- Do not put your hands in any hidden or hard to access places (eg. Drain pipes, toilets or thick bushes)
- Do NOT attempt to recap the needle
- Use a sharps container or find a rigid walled, puncture resistant, sealable container (plastic bottles are good if no disposal containers are immediately available)
- Find and put on latex/rubber gloves if possible
- Bring the container and place on ground beside to the needle/syringe.
- Do not hold the container upright in your hands as you are disposing of the needle/syringe
- Pick up the needle/syringe by the middle of the barrel keeping the sharp end facing away from you at all times.
- Place the needle/syringe in the container sharp end first; and securely close the lid, holding the container at the top.
- Remove gloves (if appropriate and wash hands with running water and soap
- Place the sealed container into your nearest Needle and Syringe Program (NSP) for disposal as medical waste.
- Other items that have come into contact with blood should be disposed of in the same container as the used needle/syringe, or placed into double plastic bags and then into rubbish, or taken to a NSP for disposal.
- Advise children to inform an adult if they find unsafely disposed of needles/syringes
- Call your appropriate state authority to report any incidence of unsafely discarded needles and syringes.

Needle Stick Injury

If you sustain a needle stick injury:

- Stay calm and encourage the wound to bleed (gently squeeze).
- Wash the area with cold running water and soap (if available).
- Apply an antiseptic and band-aid.
- As soon as possible contact one of the following for advice on the need for HIV or Hepatitis B/C testing, counselling and possible hepatitis and tetanus inoculation.
 - [Local doctor](#)
 - [Hospital](#)
 - [Sexual Health Clinic](#)
 - [Community Health Centre](#)

Further Information on Disposal

Call your respective state authority for more information.