

Tattooing and body piercing guidance

PART B – Appendix 04

Safe use and disposal of sharps

Before use:

- Ensure that sharps disposal box is correctly assembled.
- Ensure that the label on the box is filled in upon assembly.
- Ensure appropriate colour sharps box lid for use based on medicinal contamination and how the waste should be treated and disposed of i.e. orange lid for sharps derived from tattooing/body piercing procedures.
- Sharps boxes are type approved for solids and should not be used for quantities of liquid waste.
- Sharps boxes must comply with UN 3291 and BS7320 standards.
- Boxes must be available in different sizes. Tamper-proof sharps containers are also available.
- Boxes must be available at all locations where sharps are used.
- Boxes must never be placed on the floor.
- Boxes must be placed on a level surface or wall-mounted below shoulder height and be near to the area they are being used.
- Boxes must never be left in areas where clients may have open access to them.
- Assess, in terms of risk, the most appropriate size of sharps container for the tattoo/body piercing setting.

During use:

- Practitioners must be competent in procedures using sharps.
- The person using the sharp is responsible for disposing of it.
- Never pass sharps from hand to hand.
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (gloves at a minimum).
- Assemble devices with care.
- Do not disassemble devices (e.g. needle bar and needle)—dispose of as a complete unit.
- Do not re-sheath/recap used needles/razors.
- Close sharps box opening (temporary closure device) between uses.
- Never move an open sharps box.
- Use the handle to carry.

After use:

- Disposal of sharps is the responsibility of the user.
- Dispose of sharps immediately after use.
- Do not bend or break needles before disposal (e.g. a tattoo needle from a needle bar).
- Do not leave full sharps boxes for disposal by other staff.
- Fill sharps boxes only to the 'fill' line and never overfill.
- Shut and lock box when full for disposal.
- Never use tape to seal sharps boxes.
- Label box with source such as name of person/ premises and describe waste content.
- Dispose of sharps boxes as clinical waste for incineration only.
- Never place sharps boxes in clinical/offensive waste bags.
- Sharps containers must never be left unsupervised. They must be locked in a cupboard/ operating/procedure room when not in use.
- Never try and retrieve items from a sharps container.
- Place damaged sharps containers inside a larger container – lock and label prior to disposal. Do not place inside a waste bag.

Reference

National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) (2012). Infection control: Prevention and control of healthcare-associated infections in primary and community care (CG139).

<http://guidance.nice.org.uk/CG139>