

Occupational Exposure Management

Working in a care home, you may on occasion be exposed to items or substances that have the potential to be harmful. This programme looks at the steps you can take to minimise and deal with the exposure.

When we talk about exposure and management of spillages we mean you coming into contact with body fluid - splashes of blood or urine, that type of thing.

Personal protective equipment that is splashed should be changed immediately. Skin should be washed with liquid soap and warm water.

Splashes to the eyes or mouth should be rinsed immediately with water.

If you wear contact lenses remove them before you irrigate. Do not swallow the water you have used to rinse your mouth.

When we talk about management and exposure to sharps we mean items such as broken glass, razor blades, scissors – in fact anything that can cut or puncture the skin as well as the more obvious sharps such as needles.

There are some procedures that involve the use of a sharp device such as a single patient use “fingerprick” device to check blood glucose levels for people with diabetes. From time to time you may be involved in this procedure. It is important that these devices are used correctly to prevent infection and injury to the person you are assisting and yourself.

To avoid contamination from a sharp device or blood and body fluids on the skin, you must ensure that any cuts and abrasions are covered with a waterproof dressing and that you wear the appropriate personal protective equipment.

- Used sharps must not be re-sheathed and must be discarded directly into a sharps container
- These must not be filled above the mark that indicates that the bin is full – that’s no more than three quarters
- Never attempt to push any sharp item that protrudes from the container
- The sharp container should be taken to the place where the procedure is taking place and the sharp immediately disposed of after use
- The sharps container must not be placed on the floor and the temporary closure mechanism must be activated when not in use

Preventing Infection in Care

Infection Prevention and Control:
Care Homes for Older People and
Home Environment



Even with the greatest of care accidents do sometimes happen. Needlestick - the term given to a puncture wound made by a needle is the most commonly reported injury amongst health and social care staff. All are preventable with due care and attention to the risks involved.

Needlestick injuries have the potential of transferring bacteria and viruses including the transmission of Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV.

Should an injury occur whether it's a needlestick injury, a cut caused by a razor or a bite mark that breaks the skin, you should act immediately.

- Encourage the wound to bleed
- Do not suck the wound or shake it
- Gently wash under running warm water with ordinary liquid soap and do not scrub
- Dry then cover with a waterproof dressing
- Ensure the item that caused the injury is disposed of safely

Any exposure to spillages or sharps should be reported to your supervisor and you should follow the specific accident reporting policy in your setting.

To break the chain of infection:

Remember

- Follow the safe use and disposal of sharp items precautions
- Always take the sharp container to where you perform the procedure
- Remember to find out where your eye/mouth washout kits are stored
- Follow your local reporting systems following all incidents or injury