

Safer Work Practices For Laboratory Services

Laboratory departments consistently deal with Blood and Body Fluids (BBF) and generally exposed to a higher risk of bloodborne pathogens given the nature of the work tasks, patient population and type of interventions performed.

Invasive procedures, such as phlebotomy, are routinely done and on an emergent basis. Patients may be uncooperative, combative or generally challenging to obtain samples for a wide variety of reasons. The collection, processing and analysis of BBF's are a primary focus of the department.

All staff should follow general or common BBF precautions and general sharps container practices.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves, masks, lab coats and face shields must be worn whenever there is a potential for a BBF exposure such as a splash.

- PPE must be readily available to staff.
 - Staff are expected to use the appropriate PPE and should remind co-workers to wear PPE when appropriate.
 - Established departmental procedures must be followed at all times.
- Do not pass contaminated sharps from one person to another.

- Single use sharps must be immediately disposed of (e.g. needle) at point of use.
 - Multi use items such as scalpel blades, forceps must be handled using established procedures and devices to prevent a sharps injury.
- Uncooperative or psychologically disturbed patients might be sedated or given pain medicine, if ordered and indicated, prior to invasive or painful procedures.
- Whenever possible, obtain assistance when drawing blood from an uncooperative, combative or confused patient.
- During codes or high stress situations try to keep calm. Communicate your actions to each other and properly dispose of sharps immediately after use rather than holding them in your hand or setting them on a table or bed.
 - When possible, send two lab technicians to a code or trauma so one can help or ask a nurse to help hold the patient.
- Before you begin a procedure with a sharp device, assure that a stable work surface and a needle disposal container are available.
- Use safety multi-draw needles and plastic blood tubes and capillary tubes in place of glass whenever reasonably possible.
- Be aware that a wide variety of things, even a sneeze or cough, can result in an unexpected movement.
- Butterfly needles are higher risk devices for needlesticks:
 - limit the use of conventional butterfly devices;
 - always use a safety engineered butterfly where appropriate;
 - stretch out the butterfly tubing when removed from the package to reduce recoil;
 - use care when putting the needle in the disposal container as it can flip out of the container.
- Check with the patient's nurse and/or the log book to obtain special information you may need to know.
- Glass blood tubes sometimes break in centrifuge. Plastic tubes are available and recommended.
- Pick up all broken glass with forceps, brush and dust -pan, or another tool to avoid hand contact.
- Processing specimens sent in syringes with needle still attached should be avoided due to the increased risk of a needle stick. Notify your supervisor / manager, patient's nurse and physician.

General Blood and Body Fluid Safe Work Practices

The purpose of safe work practices are to provide a safer work environment for health care workers who may be exposed to Blood and Body Fluids (BBF) by handling:

- Sharps
- Initiating intravenous or subcutaneous access
- Administering medication via IM, SC routes

Workers who may be exposed to other Blood and Body Fluids such as:

- Splashes
- Soiled laundry
- Bio-hazardous waste or
- Other body fluids.

By following appropriate procedures and practices you will have taken steps to improve the safety of co-workers, patients and your self.



More Lab Practices

- Only approved sharps / biohazard containers should be used.
- Portable sharps containers should be used when a fixed container is not within close proximity.
- Sharps containers must be replaced when they are $\frac{3}{4}$ full or the fill line is reached.
 - This helps to prevent over filling or the protrusion of sharps from the opening and / or the sides of the containers.
- Develop a process or practice (e.g. a white board, lab activity book) to identify those patients who are "hard draws" or difficult to obtain specimens from.
- For patient confidentiality reasons, the information must be located where only employees treating the patients may view it.
- A "Lab Activity Book" at each nursing station. Information that may be identified could include: tests to be drawn, patient idiosyncrasies, what devices were used successfully to obtain sample, etc.

Sharps CARE

Lab & Collections Safe Work Practices

