



# Preventing Unintentional Needlesticks

West Virginia University  
Environmental Health and Safety



## Needle Handling Precautions

- Minimize the amount of time spent handling syringes with needles or number of instances using syringes with needles to effectively reduce your exposure to needlesticks.
- Wear suitable personal protective equipment, such as gloves, protective eyewear, lab coats or coveralls, and/or face shields, when using a syringe with a needle.
- Carefully remove the disposable syringe with capped needle from its packaging.
- Keep a needle capped until you are ready to fill a syringe and/or begin an injection.
- When injecting animals, firmly hold or secure the animal and inject the needle in a motion that is directed away from your body or appendages.
- If resistance is encountered, do not attempt to force a needle into the intended target site. Select a new target site and firmly and smoothly insert the needle.
- Do not replace the needle cap before disposing of the syringe with needle in a hard-walled sharps container.
- Do not overfill the hard-walled sharps container. Leave about two inches of room at the top of the container.
- When full, coordinate with a waste hauler for final disposal of the hard-walled sharps container at an approved facility.
- If you experience an unintentional needlestick, wash the puncture site with soap and water and cover with a clean bandage. Seek medical help if you have been injected with animal blood/fluids or a harmful chemical. Report any unintentional needlesticks to your supervisor and have your supervisor complete an injury/illness report form. Forward the completed injury/illness form to EHS.
- Following completion of an injection task wash your hands with soap and water.

