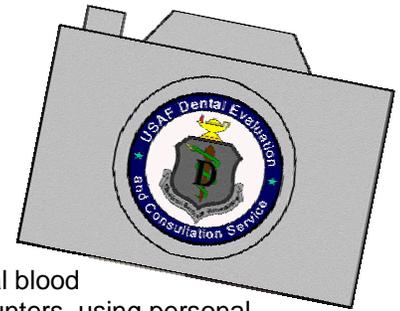


# INFECTION CONTROL SNAPSHOT

## Engineering & Work Practice Controls



Avoiding occupational blood exposures is the primary way to prevent transmission of HBV, HCV, and HIV in health-care settings. Methods used to reduce occupational blood exposures in dental settings include using standard precautions for all patient encounters, using personal protective equipment and disposing of waste appropriately, and employee training and education. Using engineering and work practice controls are also key elements of an exposure prevention program because they can minimize or eliminate employee exposure.

**Engineering controls** remove or isolate a hazard in the workplace and are frequently technology based. Whenever possible, engineering controls should be used as the primary method to reduce exposures to bloodborne pathogens with sharp instruments and needles.

**Examples**

- Sharps containers
- Needle recapping devices
- Instrument cassettes
- Needles, scalpels and other devices with engineered sharps injury prevention features: self-sheathing anesthetic needles, retractable scalpels, and needleless IV ports



**Work practice controls** are behavior-based and are intended to reduce the risk of blood exposure by changing the manner in which a task is performed.

**Examples**

- Using a one-handed scoop technique, a mechanical device designed for holding the needle cap to facilitate one-handed recapping, or an engineered sharps injury protection device (e.g., needles with re-sheathing mechanisms) for recapping needles between uses and before disposal
- Not bending or breaking needles before disposal
- Avoiding passing a syringe with an unsheathed needle
- Removing burs before disassembling the handpiece from the dental unit
- Using instruments, rather than fingers, to grasp needles, retract tissue, and load/unload needles and scalpels
- Placing used disposable syringes and needles, scalpel blades, and other sharp items in appropriate puncture-resistant containers located as close as feasible to where the items were used
- Giving verbal announcements when passing sharps



### A Few Reminders

- Use engineering and work practice controls routinely to minimize or eliminate employee exposure; when engineering controls are not available or appropriate, use work practice controls.
- Engineering controls must be examined and maintained or replaced on a regular schedule to ensure their effectiveness.
- Work practices must be examined regularly to ensure their effectiveness.

Abbreviations: HBV=Hepatitis B Virus; HCV=Hepatitis C Virus; HIV=Human Immunodeficiency Virus



Just a few things to think about

- What work practice controls do you use?
- What engineering controls do you use?

### If you want more info

- CDC Guidelines for Infection Control in Dental Health-Care Settings ([www.cdc.gov/oralhealth](http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth)).
- CDC. Sharps Safety: Be Sharp. Be Safe. ([www.cdc.gov/sharpssafety](http://www.cdc.gov/sharpssafety)).
- OSHA Bloodborne Pathogen Standard ([www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)).
- USAF Guidelines for Infection Control in Dentistry (<http://airforcemedicine.afms.mil/decs>).

