



# Toolbox Talk

## Topic: Needlesticks

All needlesticks or punctures by needles that may have been contaminated with another person's blood or bodily fluids are considered recordable and should be noted in the OSHA 300 log. Needlestick injuries are considered "privacy concern" cases and the affected employee's name must be protected.

Puncture wounds are different from lacerations because they bleed only a little and the wounds often 'seal over' and appear to be healed. Therefore, puncture wounds are easy to disregard. However, serious problems can result from puncture wounds. The following are a few of the diseases that can be contracted after being 'stuck' accidentally with a 'dirty' needle.

- **Tetanus or 'lockjaw'**

Immunizations against tetanus should be kept up-to-date and should be received as follows: initial series of two injections, four weeks apart, followed by a booster in one year, a routine booster every eight to ten years and a booster injection following an injury if the most recent booster is not within five years of the injury. Remember, tetanus is rare, but when it does occur, it is almost always fatal! No preventive measures are wasted.

- **Hepatitis**

This is an infectious disease, which causes inflammation of the liver and can result in permanent liver damage if the case is severe.

- **Syphilis**

This disease can be transmitted by needle if only a small amount of time elapses between the 'sticking' of the infected patient and the 'sticking' of the employee with the same needle.

### The following rules should prevent most puncture wounds:

- Do not grab trash or handle syringes with your hands. Use grabbers or shovels.
- Puncture-resistant insoles can be worn where there is risk of footwear penetration (i.e., tire recycling, metalworking, landfill sites).

### If you are the victim of a puncture wound, take immediate action:

- Wash the wound and surrounding area with an iodophor solution.
- Report the injury to your supervisor.
- Seek medical treatment at an occupational clinic.
- Be alert for symptoms, especially those of hepatitis, such as fatigue, nausea and sometimes vomiting, lack of appetite, swollen glands and sore throat. Smokers with hepatitis may develop a distaste for tobacco. Yellowing of the skin and eyes can be present. Treatment of hepatitis involves several weeks of rest, usually at home, taking vitamins and following a special diet.

