



# Sharps injury

If you pierce or puncture your skin with a used medical sharp (this could be a needle, scalpel or glass from broken equipment), you must follow this first aid advice immediately:

- encourage the wound to bleed, ideally by holding it under running water.
- wash the wound using warm running water and soap.
- don't scrub the wound while you're washing it.
- don't suck the wound.
- dry the wound and cover it with a waterproof plaster or dressing.

You should also seek immediate medical advice **within one hour** by going to your nearest A&E department. The reason for this is that once someone has used a needle or sharp, viruses in their blood such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C or HIV may contaminate it. The risk of infection is low; however you will need to be assessed to rule this out.

## Assessing your injury

The healthcare professional treating you will assess the risks to your health and ask about your injury – for example, how and when it happened, or who had

used the needle. Samples of your blood may need to be tested for hepatitis B and C or HIV.

If the other person gives their consent, your healthcare professional may also arrange to test samples of the blood on the sharp contaminant. Healthcare workers must safely dispose of the sharp source.

## Will I need any treatment?

If your healthcare professional thinks you are at a low risk of infection, you may not need any treatment. If there's a higher risk of infection, you may need:

- antibiotic treatment, for example if you have cellulitis (infection of the skin).
- a tetanus vaccine.
- vaccination against hepatitis B.
- treatment to prevent HIV.

## What happens next?

The injury will need to be documented by our healthcare staff and a follow-up appointment arranged with your GP. A letter will be sent informing your GP of the incident, action taken and the recommended follow-up. Please contact the infection control team on 020 7253 3411 (ext. 2539), who will be able to direct you to services which can provide further support.



This leaflet is adapted from NHS Choices: “What should I do if I injure myself with a used needle?” (2018) <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/accidents-first-aid-and-treatments/what-should-i-do-if-i-injure-myself-with-a-used-needle/>

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**Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust**  
**City Road, London EC1V 2PD**  
**Phone: 020 7253 3411**  
**[www.moorfields.nhs.uk](http://www.moorfields.nhs.uk)**

**Moorfields Direct telephone helpline**  
 Phone: 020 7566 2345  
 Monday-Friday, 8.30am-9pm  
 Saturday, 9am-5pm  
 Information and advice on eye conditions and treatments from experienced ophthalmic-trained nurses.

**Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)**  
 Phone: 020 7566 2324/ 020 7566 2325  
 Email: [moorfields.pals@nhs.net](mailto:moorfields.pals@nhs.net)  
 Moorfields’ PALS team provides confidential advice and support to help you with any concerns you may have about the care we provide, guiding you through the different services available at Moorfields. The PALS team can also advise you on how to make a complaint.

**Your right to treatment within 18 weeks**

Under the NHS constitution, all patients have the right to begin consultant-led treatment within 18 weeks of being referred by their GP. Moorfields is committed to fulfilling this right, but if you feel that we have failed to do so, please contact our patient advice and liaison service (PALS) who will be able to advise you further (see above). For more information about your rights under the NHS constitution, visit [www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs](http://www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs)