

Roseman University College of Dental Medicine

Sharps Exposure Protocol

Sharps exposures are an inherent risk in the dental clinical environment due to the routine use of instruments such as injection needles, scalpels, suture needles, and scalers. Because dental care involves close contact with patients who may have communicable diseases, it is essential that all exposures are managed promptly, consistently, and appropriately.

The **health and safety of our students is the school's highest priority**. While the risk of disease transmission from a sharps exposure in a dental setting is **extremely low**, established protocols, vaccination requirements, and post-exposure precautions are in place to further reduce risk and ensure appropriate care when exposures occur.

Prevention remains the most effective strategy; however, when a sharps exposure does occur, the following protocol must be followed.

Prevention

All students, faculty, and staff are expected to adhere to standard precautions and institutional infection-control policies at all times. Preventive expectations include, but are not limited to:

- Safe and deliberate handling of all sharps
- Use of approved one-handed techniques or safety devices when applicable
- Maintaining situational awareness during instrument transfer and procedures
- Immediate disposal of sharps in approved sharps containers

Definition of Sharps Exposure

A sharps exposure is defined as any percutaneous injury (e.g., puncture or cut) involving a sharp instrument, including but not limited to: injection needles, scalpels, suture needles, scalers, orthodontic wires, or other sharp dental instruments.

Immediate Response

In the event of a sharps exposure:

1. **Stop treatment immediately** and ensure the clinical area is safe.

2. Perform appropriate first aid (e.g., wash the affected area thoroughly with soap and water).
 3. Stabilize dental procedure if in the middle of treatment.
 4. **Notify the Clinic Director, Program Director, or Attending Faculty member immediately.**
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Reporting Requirements

- The exposure must be reported to the student's **Clinic Director, Program Director, or Attending Faculty member**.
 - The AEODO Administrative Assistant will provide the appropriate exposure and incident reporting forms.
 - Timely reporting is critical to ensure appropriate medical evaluation and documentation.
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Source Patient Evaluation

For purposes of documentation, the patient associated with the exposure will be referred to as the **“source.”**

Following a sharps exposure:

- The source patient's health history should be reviewed.
- The patient should be **politely asked** if they have any known illnesses of concern.
- The patient should be **politely asked** if they are willing to undergo testing for major communicable disease concerns **at no cost to themselves**.

Patients **cannot be required** to undergo testing. Participation is voluntary, and refusal does not impact their care. All documentation should consistently use the term *source*.

Student Evaluation and Testing

- Medical evaluation and testing should be completed **as soon as possible** and treated as a priority.
- The student is responsible for contacting their insurance provider to determine the preferred testing location.

- The school **prefers CareNow** for testing; however, if the student's insurance requires an alternative location, the student should follow insurance guidance.
 - The school will provide the appropriate **laboratory request** for required testing.
 - There will be **no cost to the student** for required testing or follow-up care.
 - Any bills received by the student must be submitted to the school for payment.
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Documentation and Follow-Up

- After appropriate testing has been completed, the student must submit an **Unusual Occurrence** form.
 - This form is accessed through the **rosemandental.org landing page or the AEODO Administrative Assistant**.
 - The report should include accurate and complete details of the exposure.
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Institutional Commitment

Roseman University College of Dental Medicine is committed to supporting students following a sharps exposure through:

- Prompt access to medical evaluation and testing
- Clear guidance throughout the process
- Coverage of costs associated with required care
- Ongoing support and reassurance

Although sharps exposures can be stressful, students should be reassured that transmission risk in dental settings is very low and that effective safeguards and response measures are in place. Prevention, vigilance, and immediate reporting are essential to maintaining a safe clinical environment for all.