Needlestick and other sharps injuries are a serious hazard in any healthcare setting. Contact with contaminated needles, scalpels, broken glass, and other sharps may expose healthcare workers to blood that contains pathogens which pose a grave, potentially lethal risk.

ACTIVITIES WITH POTENTIAL FOR NEEDLESTICK INJURIES
Home healthcare workers can be at risk for needlestick or sharps injuries when they:
• Handle needles that must be taken apart or manipulated after use.
• Dispose of needles attached to tubing.
• Manipulate the needle in the client.
• Recap a needle.
• Use needles or glass equipment to transfer body fluid between containers.
• Fail to dispose of used needles in puncture-resistant sharps containers.
• Lack proper workstations for procedures using sharps.
• Work quickly.
• Bump into a needle, a sharp, or another worker while either person is holding a sharp.

EMPLOYERS SHOULD
• Establish a bloodborne pathogen control program that meets all of the requirements of the OSHA bloodborne pathogens standard (http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/bloodbornepathogens/index.html).
• Eliminate the use of needle devices whenever safe and effective alternatives are available.
• Provide needle devices with safety features.
• Provide sharps containers for workers to bring into clients’ homes.
• Investigate all sharps-related injuries.
• Provide post-exposure medical evaluations.

EMPLOYEES SHOULD
• Avoid using needles whenever safe and effective alternatives are available.
• Avoid recapping or bending needles that might be contaminated.
• Bring standard-labeled, leak-proof, puncture-resistant sharps containers to clients’ homes. Do not assume such containers will be available there. Promptly dispose of used needle devices and sharps, which might be contaminated, in the containers.
• Plan for the safe handling and disposal of needles before use.
• Store sharps containers out of the reach of children, pets, and others not needing access.
• Secure used sharps containers during transport to prevent spilling.
• Follow standard precautions, infection prevention, and general hygiene practices consistently.
• Participate in your employer’s bloodborne pathogens training program.
• Help your employer select and evaluate devices with safety features.
• Use devices with safety features provided by your employer.
• Report any needlestick and other sharps injury immediately to your employer.

If you experience a needlestick or sharps injury or are exposed to the blood or other body fluid of a client during the course of your work, immediately follow these steps:
• Wash needlesticks and cuts with soap and water.
• Flush splashes to the nose, mouth, or skin with water.
• Irrigate eyes with clean water, saline, or sterile irrigants.
• Report the incident to your supervisor.
• Immediately seek medical treatment.