London Health Sciences Centre
Occupational Health and Safety Services

Learning from Incidents

Preventing Cuts: Opening Ampules and Vials

What Happened?



There have been injuries to staff reported recently while attempting to break open ampules or vials. Staff can cut their thumb and finger when the glass ampule shatters or exposes a sharp edge.

"I was breaking an ampule for a patient's morphine dose and when I broke the ampule a piece of glass was sticking up and cut my right thumb while I broke the ampule."

"While opening an ampule of hydralazine, the glass ampule broke into several small pieces and one cut my thumb"

Factors

- Six staff per year reported cuts from opening glass ampules.
- Risk to staff and affiliates of infection to blood borne pathogens due to open wounds.
- Risk of cross-contamination of medication affecting patient safety.
- Damaged ampules may be wasted increasing cost of expensive medications
- Staff that are unable to properly perform hand hygiene may affect staffing and ability to provide patient care.

How Can We Prevent or Minimize This Incident?



- When appropriate use a disposable ampule breaker.
  HMMS #118249 - Cost $22.50/box of 100 or $0.23 each
- Many ampules have a dot on the neck. Face the dot away from you to snap off
- To safely open the ampule, follow the instruction sheet on the next page.
- Dispose ampule and ampule breaker into the pharmacy waste container

Where Can I Get More Information or Assistance?

Review the Sharps Handling Policy

Contact your Leader if you have a health and safety question, concern or suggestion.

Safety is Everyone's Responsibility at LHSC

Instructions for the Disposable Ampule Breaker (#10273)



1. Slide the breaker onto the tip of the ampule.



2. Push the breaker down as far as possible.



3. Firmly grip the bottom of the breaker to hold the ampule tight.



4. Snap the top of the breaker to the side.



5. The top of the ampule will break away into the top of the breaker. After breaking, hold the top of the ampule breaker firmly to prevent the ampule-top from falling out of the breaker.



6. Dispose of the breaker with the ampule top.

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Sheet #10273
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