

# Managing the Regulatory Environment

## ADA's Guidelines for Practice Success™ (GPS™)

### ADA Do's and Don'ts for the Safe Handling of Instruments and Sharps

#### Do's

- Consider every sharp item (needles, scalers, burs, lab knives, wires, etc.) that has been contaminated by patient blood and/or saliva potentially infective.
- Follow best practices for recapping used needles. One option is to use the one-handed scoop technique. Another is to use a device specifically designed to hold the needle cap while recapping needles, such as between multiple injections, in the operatory.
- Refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Division of Oral Health's [Device Screening and Evaluation Forms](#) for guidance on how to evaluate anesthetic syringe devices with engineered safety features.
- When recapping used needles, always make sure the technique used directs the point of the needle away from the body.
- Always use a carrying tray, ideally one with a locking lid, with sides that are high enough to prevent instruments from rolling off.
- Make sure your sterilization room is set-up correctly.
  - Make sure a checklist that details all sterilization steps to be followed within the practice is posted in a prominent location.
  - Always follow CDC recommendations regarding the cleaning, disinfection and sterilization of dental equipment. That information is available in the [Guidelines for Infection Control in Dental Health-Care Settings—2003](#). In 2016, CDC issued [Infection Prevention & Control Guidelines & Recommendations](#) which updated its previous guidelines and should be reviewed provides valuable updates to the agency's 2003 guidelines.
  - Make sure the checklist stresses that the steps it details should be followed every time.
- Stay up-to-date on new products and innovations.
  - Evaluate safer sharps when possible.
- Always place used, disposable syringes and needles and other sharps in puncture-resistant containers or in the treatment room if required by the state's OSHA plan.
  - All receptacles for used sharps should be close to the area(s) where sharps are used.
  - Make sure clinical staff can properly disassemble and reassemble any equipment, such as when they remove needles from syringes, remove scalpel blades, or remove burs from handpieces.
- Everyone should be vigilant about the proper storage of instruments and ensure that sterilized instruments are maintained separately from those in open or otherwise compromised packaging.
- Boost staff's awareness about the proper use and handling of all sharps.
- Make certain that the practice's procedures reflect CDC recommendations.
  - Provide access to resources that detail "what," "how" and "why" the OSHA regulations relating to sharps are in place.
- CDC's [Summary of Infection Prevention Practices in Dental Settings: Basic Expectations for Safe Care](#) contains helpful resources on many topics including sharps safety and safe injection practices.

**Don'ts**

- Never use both hands to recap used needles.
- No one should use soiled hands to select and remove instruments from drawers.
- Don't assume that everyone knows everything or that they remember everything.
  - Make sure that every new hire, including temporary workers, know the practice's procedures for handling sharps.
  - Provide training to all new personnel and have current personnel participate in "refresher" training sessions.
- Never dispose of any sharps, regardless of whether they're used or unused, through either the regular or medical waste; they must always be placed in the designated sharps container.

**Resources:** CDC [Device Screening and Evaluation Forms](#)  
CDC [Guidelines for Infection Control in Dental Health-Care Settings—2003](#)  
CDC [Infection Prevention & Control Guidelines & Recommendations](#)  
CDC [Summary of Infection Prevention Practices in Dental Settings: Basic Expectations for Safe Care](#)

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