


including scalpels, knives, syringe needles, seekers etc

Substance	Hazard	Comment
Scalpels, knives and other blades	 DANGER	Cuts and puncture wounds can lead to infection, especially if the blade or point is contaminated by contact with living or once-living material.
Syringe needles		Careless use and handling of scalpels, syringes with needles, seekers and other sharps can lead to cuts and puncture wounds.
Seekers and other sharps		<p>Sharp scalpels are safer to use than blunt ones because there is less risk of them slipping as less force needs to be used.</p> <p>Carrying scalpels, syringes with needles, seekers and other sharps especially in crowded rooms, can present a hazard to the user and others.</p> <p>Sharps that have been disposed of carelessly can present a hazard to waste handlers and others.</p>

Typical control measures to reduce risk

- Find out from a reliable source if there any health and safety issues relating to the material being dissected.
- Cut in a direction away from yourself and where possible cut using a cutting board, dissection tray, a pad or similar.
- Wear eye protection when changing scalpel blades or cutting material likely to "flick" (eg cartilage or bone).
- Cooperate with any requirement to count sharps out at the beginning and in at the end of a lesson.
- Carry sharps with the blade or point protected, eg in a shallow tray, and do not carry them at all if you are likely to be jostled.
- Dispose of used sharps in a proper, safe container, eg a sturdy box, that is clearly labelled, sealed and wrapped before disposal.
- Take steps to prevent theft.

Assessing the risks

- What are the details of the activity to be undertaken? What are the hazards?
- What is the chance of something going wrong?
eg could the user or somebody else be cut or stabbed by accident?
- How serious would it be if something did go wrong?
- How can the risk(s) be controlled for this activity?
eg can it be done safely? Does the procedure need to be altered?

Emergency action

In all emergency situations, alert the responsible adult immediately. Be aware that actions may include the following:

- Minor cuts Wash the wound. Get the casualty to apply a small, sterile dressing.
- Severe cuts Lower the casualty to the floor. Raise the wound as high as possible. If feasible, ask the casualty to apply pressure on or as close to the cut as possible, using fingers, a pad of cloth or, better, a sterile dressing (adding further layers as necessary). If the casualty is unable to do so, apply pressure yourself, protecting your skin and clothes from contamination by blood if possible. Leave any embedded large bodies and press around them. Consult a medic.