

Protect employees during belongings searches



Workers who perform searches of property, people, and belongings may encounter contaminated needles/sharps and illicit drugs. Employers should train workers to follow precautions for bloodborne pathogens and how to conduct searches more safely.

These measures can help protect workers from exposures, but not every measure will work in every industry. We suggest you work with your employees to determine which tools will work for your organization.

Employer actions

- Develop a bloodborne pathogen exposure control plan in accordance with OSHA's bloodborne pathogen standard.
 - BBP Q&A (bit.ly/3V0zTw6)
- BBP Exposure control plan (bit.ly/33N0HaA)
- BBP OR OSHA online course (bit.ly/4a4JxLJ)
- Provide bloodborne pathogen training at time of assignment and annually.
- Provide appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and ensure employees understand proper use, fit, and limitations of PPE.
- Arrange for immunizations and prompt evaluation of needlestick injuries by a health care provider. Ensure access for after-hours injuries.
- Ensure employees with exposure to blood are offered hepatitis B vaccines or measures are taken to determine whether they are immune.

- Ensure employees understand needlestick injury protocols including prompt reporting and treatment.
- Maintain a sharps injury log, like the example in this resource: Bloodborne Pathogens (bit.ly/3P83CiX)
- Provide puncture-resistant sharps disposal containers to dispose of sharps safely.
 - Protecting Yourself When Handling Contaminated Sharps (bit.ly/48LkKC7)
 - Safely Using Sharps (Needles and Syringes) at Home, at Work and on Travel | FDA (bit.ly/48M7ay6)
- Arrange for a disposal service for sharps containers.
- Arrange for a disposal service for illicit drugs.
- Ensure staff receive training in the handling and disposal of illicit drugs.

Assistive devices to lessen risk

- Glove pouches
- Lighted mirror tools to examine hard-to-see areas
- Magnetic pick-up tools when searching in dark, hard-to-see areas
- Pick-up tools or grabbers to handle and dispose of visible needles
- Puncture/needlestick-resistant gloves.

CDC PPE guidance to prevent fentanyl exposure

- Fentanyl: Emergency Responders at Risk | NIOSH | CDC (bit.ly/3P9FtbK)
- 1910.134 - Respiratory protection | Occupational Safety and Health Administration (bit.ly/439qDri)
- Respiratory protection: An example program for employees required to use respirators (bit.ly/3wTizyQ)
- Oregon OSHA respiratory protection fact sheet (bit.ly/4a1c77r)

Employee actions

- Use gloves when conducting any search.
- Do not eat or drink in a search area.
- Wear appropriate PPE if fentanyl is suspected and drugs or drug paraphernalia are present.
- When possible, conduct searches in a well-lit area.
- If the individual is present while conducting any search, ask if there is anything sharp in contents before the search.
- Ask the individuals to empty their pockets and to turn them outside.
- Ask the individual to empty purse, bag, or backpack contents onto a table before examining contents.
- Dispose of sharps in designated sharps container. Do not attempt to re-cap or disassemble needles.
- Avoid sticking fingers into hard-to-see areas.
- Use pick-up tools (magnetic or graspers), lighted magnetic tools or mirrors, and/or puncture-resistant gloves.
- Replace sharps containers promptly and do not overfill.
- Always wash hands with soap and water after removing gloves.

Following needlestick/sharps injuries

- Immediately wash the injury site with soap and water.
- Report the incident right away and follow established guidelines for medical care.