



Guideline Statement

Registered Dietitians (RDs) have the authority to perform the controlled act of skin pricking for the purpose of collecting blood samples for monitoring capillary blood readings while practicing dietetics. RDs must ensure they are following the Professional Practice Standard for [Collecting Capillary Blood Samples through Skin Pricking & Monitoring the Blood Readings \(Point of Care Testing\)](#).¹ They are also responsible for understanding and applying the municipal laws and facility protocols regarding the appropriate disposal of sharps used for skin pricking.²

The purpose of these guidelines is to inform RDs about the legal requirements for safe and effective biomedical waste disposal and infection control protocols.

FOLLOW FACILITY PROTOCOLS FOR DISPOSAL OF BIOMEDICAL WASTE

RDs are required to follow their organization's occupational health and safety policies and procedures to reduce the risk of exposure to infection when handling biomedical and other wastes. This includes waste derived from RDs performing skin pricks for monitoring capillary blood readings.

Used lancets are a biomedical waste categorized as sharps.² Registered Dietitians and facility staff who are handling and disposing of the lancets used to take blood samples (e.g. custodial staff who collect garbage) risk exposure to infection. RDs must follow safe disposal of used lancets (refer to page 2).

Where there are concerns about unsafe practices for the disposal of sharps, RDs should address these questions and advocate for changes within their workplace.

Biomedical waste includes:

- “(a) human anatomical waste,
- (b) human blood waste,
- (c) animal anatomical waste,
- (d) animal blood waste,
- (e) microbiology laboratory waste,
- (f) sharps waste,
- (g) cytotoxic waste,
- (h) waste that has come into contact with human blood waste that is infected or suspected of being infected with any infectious substance (human), or
- (i) a waste containing or derived from one or more wastes described in clauses (a) through (h)...”

Human blood waste includes “waste consisting of,

- (a) liquid or semi-liquid human blood or blood products,
- (b) items saturated with liquid or semi-liquid human blood or blood products...”³

MINISTRY GUIDELINES FOR DISPOSAL OF BIOMEDICAL WASTES

Safe Disposal of Used Lancets

The Ministry of the Environment's [*Guideline C-4: the Management of Biomedical Waste in Ontario*](#) (2016), specifies that biomedical waste should not be placed in containers with other facility waste. To minimize the physical and biological hazards associated with waste sharps, lancets should be disposed of into puncture-resistant leak-proof containers dedicated specifically for that purpose. The sharps container must also be yellow colour-coded and marked with the universal biohazard symbol.³

Disposal of Soiled Test Strips, Cotton Balls or Band Aids

The Ministry of Environment does not consider soiled test strips, cotton balls or band aids used during skin pricks to be biomedical waste. These items may be disposed of in regular garbage containers unless facility protocols dictate otherwise.

MOBILE SCREENING & OTHER ATYPICAL SETTINGS

Where RDs are performing off-site public screening clinics or work in other atypical settings, sharps should be collected in an appropriate container and transported back to their workplace for disposal. Soiled test strips, cotton balls and band aids may be disposed of in regular garbage containers, unless the off-site facility dictates otherwise.

TRANSPORTING BIOMEDICAL WASTE

Prior to transportation, biomedical waste sharps containers should be sealed, locked or closed so that no waste is likely to be released or discharged during transport. Rigid containers with a non-removable lid do not require additional packaging or containment of the biomedical waste for off-site transportation.

If an off-site facility directs RDs to transport soiled test strips, cotton balls and band aids back to their workplace for disposal, this should be done in a safe manner (e.g. in sealed containers or double-bagged garbage bags).

PRIVATE PRACTICE RDS

Private practice RDs are responsible for taking steps to reduce the risk of exposure to infection by establishing and adhering to policies and procedures based on the most currently accepted clinical and occupational health and safety information.

Where RDs are performing skin pricks in their private practice, lancets must be disposed in an appropriately labelled sharps container (refer to section: *Safe Disposal of Used Lancets*). Soiled test strips, cotton balls and band aids may be disposed of in regular garbage containers, unless facility protocols dictate otherwise.

RDs are responsible for having plans in place for the safe transport of biomedical waste sharps containers to a facility licensed appropriately under the *Environmental Protection Act* (1990), or to a biomedical waste generation facility which is willing to accept transported biomedical waste and deal with it appropriately.^{3,4}

INFECTION CONTROL

Registered Dietitians should take the time to educate themselves about infection control best practices to ensure they are following the most effective ways to reduce the spread of infections. They are encouraged to consult organizational infection control policies, the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee's resource titled: [*Routine Practices and Additional Precautions in All Health Care Settings*](#),⁵ as well as the College of Dietitians of Ontario's [*Infection Control for Regulated Professionals*](#).⁶

Revised July 2017

References:

¹ College of Dietitians of Ontario. (2012). *Professional Practice Standard Collecting Capillary Blood Samples through Skin Pricking & Monitoring the Blood Readings (Point of Care Testing)*. Available from: <https://www.collegeofdietitians.org/Resources/Scope-of-Practice/Skin-Pricks/STANDARD-OF-PROFESSIONAL-PRACTICE-Skin-Pricking.aspx>

² *Dietetics Act, 1991, Ontario Regulation 680/93*. Professional Misconduct Regulation. Provision 34. Available from: http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_930680_e.htm

³ *Guideline C-4: The Management of Biomedical Waste in Ontario*. (2016). Available from: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/c-4-management-biomedical-waste-ontario>

⁴ *Environmental Protection Act*. (1990). [Part V, Sections 4-7; Part XVII, Section 197]. Available from: http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90e19_e.htm

⁵ Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee, Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion. (2012). *Routine Practices and Additional Precautions in all Health Care Settings, 3^d Edition*. Available from: https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/RPAP_All_HealthCare_Settings_Eng2012.pdf

⁶ College of Dietitians of Ontario. (2013). *Infection Control for Regulated Professionals*. Available from: [https://www.collegeofdietitians.org/Resources/Professional-Practice/Infection-Control/Infection-Control-for-Health-Professionals-\(2013\).aspx](https://www.collegeofdietitians.org/Resources/Professional-Practice/Infection-Control/Infection-Control-for-Health-Professionals-(2013).aspx)