

Securing Medical Catheters

What are medical catheters?

Medical catheters are tubes used in health care to deliver intravenous fluids and medications or to drain body fluids. Examples include vascular access devices and chest drainage tubes.

Hazards to health care workers

Catheters used for vascular access must be inserted with a needle. Inserting a catheter exposes the health care worker to the risk of a needlestick. Sharps that are designed with engineered sharps injury protection reduce that risk, but unless they are effectively secured, intravenous catheters may move or become dislodged and require reinsertion.

Some vascular access devices and chest drainage tubes have traditionally been secured with sutures. This process directly exposes the health care worker to the risk of a needlestick injury from the suture needle.

Options for securing catheters

Generally, OSHA does not require the use of specific engineering controls or work practices. OSHA relies on the professional judgment of health care workers who insert and secure catheters to assess each situation and determine the best method to secure the catheter.

Health care workers have customarily used tape or sutures to secure medical catheters. Typically, they use sutures for central venous catheters, arterial catheters, and chest tubes. Engineering controls, such as improved adhesive products and securement devices, may decrease or eliminate the need for sutures and thus directly reduce needlestick risk.

For catheters that do not require sutures for securement, such as peripheral intravenous catheters, health care workers typically use tape. Careful and thorough catheter securement is essential since ineffective securement may result in catheter dislodgment. A variety of tapes, adhesive products, and catheter securement devices are available. Appropriate products and effective work practices are essential to provide increased catheter stability. Such products and work practices may reduce catheter dislodgement and the necessity or reinsertion with its associated needlestick risk.

OSHA requirements for catheters

OSHA's bloodborne pathogens standard requires that employers of workers who can be exposed on the job to blood or other potentially infectious materials, take time every year to consider and implement appropriate, available, and effective medical devices that are designed to eliminate or reduce exposure. That includes reviewing options for securing medical catheters and considering appropriate engineering and work practice controls.

During that review, employers must also include the input of non-managerial employees responsible for direct patient care where they face potential exposure to contaminated sharps.

For more information and additional risk management and prevention tools, visit: [fwcruminsurance.com](https://www.fwcruminsurance.com)