

# HEALTH ALERT!

## Reuse Of Needles and Syringes Puts Patients At Risk

(NAPSA)—To ensure patient safety, healthcare providers should use needles and syringes just once, then discard them. But a recent survey reveals some surprising information about the reuse of needles and syringes. The American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) conducted a survey of various healthcare providers who give medications through injections, including doctors and nurses, and found that one in 100 reuse the same needle and/or syringe on multiple patients.

Despite infection control guidelines that advise against reusing needles/syringes, the survey results suggest that there is a lack of compliance among some healthcare providers. That's why the AANA is warning patients that the reuse of needles and/or syringes may put them at risk of contracting an incurable or life-threatening infection, and recommends that patients inquire about policies and procedures for the use of needles and syringes at their hospital, clinic, or doctor's office.

"There is no excuse for ever reusing a needle or syringe on different patients," said Rodney Lester, CRNA, PhD, president of the 30,000-member AANA. "It is most disturbing that even one percent of the healthcare providers surveyed do this, potentially exposing millions of patients each year to needles and syringes contaminated with Hepatitis, HIV and other life-threatening infectious diseases."

Even though the percentages of healthcare providers who reuse needles/syringes appear to be low,



**According to the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, patients should ask their healthcare providers about needle and syringe use policies.**

it translates into an alarming number of actual healthcare providers.

The AANA suggests that patients should take an active role in ensuring the quality of their healthcare by paying close attention to what their providers are doing, asking questions, and having family members actively involved at the hospital or doctor's office.

With this in mind, the association is developing a public education campaign to make patients and their families aware of acceptable practices for needle and syringe use that ensure patient safety.