



Household Sharps-Dispose of Them Safely

Millions of individuals with serious health conditions manage their care at home. For example, people with diabetes use syringes to inject their own insulin and lancets to test their blood glucose every day.

All this creates a lot of medical waste. What's the best way to handle this waste?

The best way to protect trash handlers and sewage treatment workers against disease or injury and avoid attracting drug abusers looking for syringes to reuse is to follow these guidelines for containment and disposal of sharps.



Containment

Contain the sharps safely in your own home:

- Use a puncture-proof plastic container with a tight-fitting screw top. A plastic soda bottle or bleach bottle is good. Don't use glass because it can break. Coffee cans are not recommended because the plastic lids come off too easily.
- Label the container clearly. Write "Contains Sharps" with a waterproof marker directly on the container or on masking tape on the container.
- Once you have used a syringe or lancet, immediately put it into your container. Screw on the top. Don't clip, bend or recap the needles because you could injure yourself.
- Keep the container away from children.
- When the container is full, screw on the cap tightly. Seal it with heavy-duty tape to be extra safe.

Disposal

There are different options for getting rid of the container of sharps. Some cities and towns have more options than others. Here are the best bets for safety, health and protection of the environment:

- Call your doctor, pharmacy, or clinic and ask if they accept properly-contained sharps for disposal. Effective July 1, 1995, hospitals and nursing homes were required to accept properly-contained home medical waste for disposal.
- Ask your diabetes educator or local American Diabetes Association chapter about sharps disposal programs.
- Call your local public works department or solid waste manager. (Check the blue pages of the telephone book for their numbers.) Some communities have special household medical waste collection or drop-off days.
- Call your local health department and ask for the health educator. Ask about special household medical waste disposal programs.
- Call the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and ask for a list of licensed medical waste transporters who provide collection service to your area.

New York State law allows disposal of household sharps, along with household trash. Local laws, however, may prohibit this. Consult your local department of public works for information about laws that apply in your area.

Do not put sharps containers out with the recyclable plastics.

Sharps are not recyclable.