

Protect Yourself, Protect Your Community



Safe Options for Household Sharps Disposal

DON'T

- Put needles and lancets in the trash
- Put needles and lancets in recycling containers
- Take needles and lancets to medication collections
- Flush needles and lancets down the toilet

DO

- Package needles and lancets safely
- Dispose of needles and lancets using one of the options listed in this brochure

What are the dangers of used sharps?



Used needles and lancets can stick waste disposal workers when they are thrown away in the trash or recycling, brought to medication collections, or flushed down the toilet. Children, adults and even pets are also at risk for needle-stick injuries when sharps are disposed of improperly at home or in public settings.

Anyone accidentally stuck with a needle must get expensive medical testing and worry about the possibility of diseases such as Hepatitis or HIV. However, needle-stick injuries are a preventable health risk. Package and dispose of sharps safely to avoid exposing yourself and others to harm.

PACKAGE

Package needles and lancets safely:



Recap your own discarded sharps or clip the needle points. Even though workers in hospitals and other healthcare facilities are not allowed to recap others' needles, you can recap your own. Individuals who administer their own medications are not at risk from their own needles.



Put the sharps in a rigid, puncture-resistant container with a secure lid or cap. Acceptable containers include sharps containers you can buy or heavy plastic laundry detergent or bleach bottles with screw caps. Unacceptable containers include coffee cans, plastic milk jugs, plastic bags, pop cans or soda bottles. Note: Do not add bleach to the container. Bleach may not completely disinfect needles, and it could spill and injure you or waste handlers.



Clearly label the sharps container with the words "bio-hazard," "infectious waste" or "sharps." It's also a good idea to label detergent or bleach bottles with the words "Do not recycle" so that they are not accidentally included with recyclables.

When the container is full, seal it, store it out of reach of children and dispose of it safely with one of the options listed on the next page. Take the container to a registered sharps collection station or find another disposal option if a facility is not available in your area. **DO NOT** put the container out with the trash or recyclables, and do not take it to a medication collection unless that site is also a registered sharps collection station.



Use one of these safe disposal options:



Bring the container to a registered sharps collection station. The DNR keeps an updated list of registered sharps collection stations on its website. To find the list online, go to dnr.wi.gov and search “healthcare waste.”

Ask your doctor, clinic or local hospital if you can bring sharps to their location for disposal. Many healthcare facilities accept sharps but are not required to register with the DNR and therefore may not appear on the list of registered sharps collection stations.

Call your local pharmacy, public health department, solid waste department, or streets department to learn about other local disposal options.

Use a sharps mail-back program, which you can find with an internet search. The company will provide containers and packaging that meet U.S. postal regulations.

Write your local disposal options here:

The law in Wisconsin on proper disposal of medical sharps

Sharps must be treated before they are disposed of in a landfill. Approved treatment methods are incineration at a licensed medical waste incinerator or other methods that render the sharps non-infectious, broken, and unable to be reused. Separate disposal of medical sharps, whether used or unused, has been required in Wisconsin since 1994. Other infectious waste generated at home may be bagged and put out with the regular trash.



For more information on managing medical sharps, go to dnr.wi.gov and search **"healthcare waste."**



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For more information on managing medical sharps, contact DNRWasteMaterials@Wisconsin.gov or 608-266-2111.

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