



Disposal Tips for Home Health Care

You can help prevent injury, illness, and pollution by following some simple steps when you dispose of the sharp objects and contaminated materials you use in administering health care in your home.

You should place:

- Needles
- Syringes
- Lancets
- Other sharp objects

in a hard-plastic or metal container with a screw-on or tightly secured lid.



Many containers found in the household will do, or you may purchase containers specifically designed for the disposal of medical waste sharps. Before discarding a container, be sure to reinforce the lid with heavy-duty tape. **Do not put sharp objects in any container you plan to recycle or return to a store, and do not use glass or clear plastic containers** (see additional information below). Finally, make sure that you keep all containers with sharp objects out of the reach of children and pets.

We also recommend that:

- Soiled bandages
- Disposable sheets
- Medical gloves

be placed in securely fastened plastic bags before you put them in the garbage can with your other trash.



Preventing Injury and Pollution

Containers with sharps are not recyclable

EPA promotes all recycling activities, and therefore encourages you to discard medical waste sharps in sturdy, nonrecyclable containers, when possible. If a recyclable container is used to dispose of medical waste sharps, make sure that you don't mix the container with other materials to be recycled. Since the sharps impair a container's recyclability, a container holding your medical waste sharps properly belongs with the regular household trash. You may even want to label the container, "**NOT FOR RECYCLING.**" In addition, make sure your sharps container is made of nonbreakable material and has a lid that can be securely closed. These steps go a long way toward protecting workers and others from possible injury. (Although disposing of recyclable containers removes them from the recycling stream, the expected impact is minimal.)

Local Programs

Your state or community environmental programs may have other requirements or suggestions for disposing of your medical waste. You should contact them for any information you may need.



For additional copies of these disposal tips, please call the RCRA Hotline at 800 424-9346 or TDD 800 553-7672. In the Washington, DC metropolitan area, the number is 703 412-9810 or TDD 703 412-3323. The RCRA Hotline operates weekdays, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., eastern time.