

Safe Disposal of Sharps

Why It's Important

Needle stick injuries are a serious public health risk, causing great stress to victims and costing thousands of dollars for medical testing.

Each year thousands of Mainers use millions of needles and lancets or “sharps” as part of their routine for controlling medical conditions such as diabetes, arthritis, severe allergies and migraines. Improper disposal of these sharps into household or workplace trash or by flushing them down the toilet puts you and your family, janitorial and solid waste staff, and the general public at risk for accidental needle sticks. Needle stick injuries are a serious public health risk because of the potential for transmission of blood-borne diseases such as Hepatitis B and HIV/AIDS.

*Simply recapping a syringe is **not** enough to protect against needle sticks.*

“Sharps” Include

- Syringes
- Pen and pump needles
- Lancets
- Infusion sets

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Proper Disposal of Household Sharps in the State of Maine



What Should I Do With My Used Sharps?

Proper Containment and Disposal Practices

Handling Sharps at Home

Place used syringes, pen needles, lancets and other sharps in rigid containers resistant to leaks and punctures. **Label filled containers "DO NOT RECYCLE."**



Needle Clipping Devices

Devices that clip the needle off of a syringe allow you to throw the remaining piece in your household trash. Wrap the full device in heavy-duty tape and dispose in your trash.

Commercially Available & Mail-Back Sharps Containers

Filled commercial sharps containers (like the ones seen here) may be placed with household trash. Mail-back containers are designed to be filled and mailed to the manufacturer or manufacturer's disposal partner for proper disposal. While sharps containers may be available for purchase at your local pharmacy, some manufacturers may also provide containers free of charge through patient support programs (registration may be required). Contact the manufacturer for details.

Household Sharps Containers

Make your own sharps container using a heavy plastic bottle with a screw-on cap such as an old liquid laundry soap bottle. Seal with heavy-duty tape **and label** before disposing in your trash.

Getting Rid of the Waste

Local Hospitals

Some hospitals may accept used household sharps and dispose of them as part of their waste stream. Contact the Environmental Services Department at your local hospital for more information.

When You Are Away From Home

All Maine Turnpike Authority rest stops, some Maine airports and some retail stores have sharps disposal boxes for use while you are away from home.

For more information, contact the Maine Department of Environmental Protection Biomedical Waste Program at (207) 287-7688 or visit www.maine.dep/sharps.

Loose syringes, lancets, and other sharps should never be thrown in the trash.

Please Don't...

- Throw loose sharps into the trash or toilet.
- Leave sharps anywhere they could injure someone.
- Store used sharps in glass bottles, soda bottles, milk jugs, aluminum cans, coffee cans, or plastic bags.
- Put containers of used sharps in with recycling.

Proper disposal means:

- Clipping needles **OR**
- Placing sharps in proper containers
- Labeling containers **"DO NOT RECYCLE"**
- Using heavy-duty tape to secure container lids