

Safe Disposal Options for Needles and Syringes

What's the problem?

It is important to manage and dispose of needles, lancets, and syringes (sharps) safely to prevent injury and disease transmission from needle-sticks. Never leave needles or syringes on streets, in parks, or anywhere else where someone could get injured.

1. Storage or destruction of sharps

Store at home: Purchase a sharps disposal container from a pharmacy or get an empty laundry detergent bottle with a screw on lid (see note on back).

- ▶ Do not store used sharps in glass bottles, aluminum cans, or coffee cans.
- ▶ If you are bringing used sharps to a clinic or hospital collection site or using a mail-back program, follow their requirements, which may include use of a pre-purchased sharps container.

Always keep used sharps storage containers out of the reach of children.

Destroy at home: Devices or containers with mechanisms that bend, break, incinerate (destroy by high heat), or shear needles are called sharps needle destruction devices.

A **destruction device that incinerates needles** and lancets can be used at home to destroy sharps immediately after use. They use a few seconds of high heat to melt needles and reduce them to BB-size balls. Previously used only in healthcare facilities, these devices are now available in smaller, less expensive models for home use. ▶

Once the needle or lancet is destroyed by heat in a destruction device, the remaining syringe and melted metal can be safely disposed of in the garbage (not the recycling container).

A **needle cutter** that automatically stores the cut needles is also useful while away from home when a disposal container is not available. A needle clipper that stores clipped needles should be disposed of at a sharps collection site or through a mail-back program. ▶

MORE DISPOSAL INFORMATION ON BACK



2. Disposal options

Never place containers with used needles or syringes in a recycling bin or loose sharps in the garbage. Use one of the following options to dispose of the used needles, lancets, and syringes.

Clinics and Hospital Collection Sites

Some clinics and hospitals have collection programs for needles, lancets, and syringes used by their patients at home. If your healthcare provider has a collection program, learn about and follow their instructions for sharps storage and disposal. Do not bring used needles and syringes to your clinic or hospital if they are unable to accept them.



Home Needle-destruction Devices

Once the needle or lancet is destroyed by heat in a destruction device, the remaining syringe and melted metal can be safely disposed of in the garbage (not the recycling container). A needle clipper that stores clipped needles should be disposed of at a sharps collection site or through a mail-back program.

Mail-back Programs

Mail-back disposal programs allow home sharps users to mail used sharps to licensed disposal facilities as a safe disposal option. There is a fee charged for this service. Check with your health care provider or pharmacist, or search the yellow pages or Internet using key words “sharps mailback.”



For more information

General disease-prevention information

Minnesota Department of Health, Infectious Disease Epidemiology, Prevention and Control Division
651-201-5414
www.health.state.mn.us



Diabetes information & education

including sharps disposal:
American Diabetes Association Minnesota
763-593-5333
toll free: 888-DIABETES (342-2383)
www.diabetes.org

HIV/AIDS prevention and services

including syringe access, needle and syringe disposal, and drug-treatment programs:
Minnesota AIDS Project AIDSLine
Metro Area: 612-373-AIDS (2437)
612-373-2465 TTY
Statewide: 800-248-AIDS (2437)
888-820-2437 TTY
www.mnaidsproject.org

Legal, but less safe

In Minnesota, it is currently legal to put used sharps that are in a laundry detergent bottle with a lid into the garbage, however this is highly discouraged because of the injury and health risks it places on the garbage hauler and processing-facility workers. It is best to use one of the options previously listed for safe management and disposal of used sharps.

NEVER PLACE LOOSE NEEDLES AND SYRINGES IN THE TRASH!



- ▶ Label the empty detergent container, “Do Not Recycle: Household Sharps.”
- ▶ Put used needles in point-first into the container.
- ▶ Dispose of container when it is half-full of needles and lancets.
- ▶ Keep container capped to prevent spills.

For more information on household hazardous wastes and collection programs, contact your **county’s solid waste office** or www.moea.state.mn.us/hhw/ to find local program contact information.



Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

www.moea.state.mn.us/hhw/ ▶ 800-657-3864