

Disposal of Medical Waste

1. Know what is medical waste. Here are a few examples:
 - a. The needle used to give a person a shot (injection).
 - b. A pair of dirty gloves
 - c. Used disposable razors
 - d. A soiled wound dressing
 - e. Linen that becomes soiled from urine, stool, wound drainage, or vomitus
 - f. Facial tissue soiled when a person uses it to cover a cough or sneeze.
 - g. A wound or urine drainage bag that needs changing.
 - h. A dirty lancet used to obtain blood for blood glucose testing
 - i. Blood and urine test strips
2. Handle all medical waste as if it contains germs. If you are going to contact medical waste when caring for someone, put on a pair of clean gloves.
3. Here are ways to correctly handle medical waste items:
 - a. If you use needles, syringes or blood lancets, purchase a sharps container from a medical supply store. Another option is a nonbreakable large neck plastic bottle, like a laundry detergent bottle.
 - b. Warning: Do not use a clear container. Once you throw it away, you do not want someone to know it holds needles.
 - c. Store the sharps container in a place that children or pets cannot reach.
 - d. Do not fill the sharps container to a point where the needles or other sharps stick out of the opening. Throw the container away when it is $\frac{3}{4}$ full.
4. Secure the top of the container with duct or adhesive tape when it is $\frac{3}{4}$ full.
5. Label the outside of the container "**Not for Recycling**".
6. You may not be able to throw away a non-recyclable container in the trash. Check with your trash company to know how to dispose of the container. Some hospitals and pharmacies have sharps disposal programs.
7. Throw away soiled dressings, gloves, dirty facial tissue, intravenous and drainage tubing, and used glucose test strips in a separate plastic bag such as a grocery bag.
8. Tie the bag closed after placing the soiled items inside. If the items are heavily soiled, place the bag in a second grocery bag.
9. Secure the plastic bag so items will not fall out.
10. In most communities you can put the bag and the non-recyclable sharps container in the garbage with your other trash. But know the laws in the city in which you live. In some cases you will have to separate medical waste from household trash.
11. Place soiled linen or the person's clothing in a separate plastic bag so you keep the soiled linen away from other linen.
12. Wash soiled linen separately from clothing or other linen. Be sure to wear gloves while handling heavily soiled garments.
13. Wash clothing in a washing machine using normal settings. Use normal concentration of household bleach added to the wash cycle.
14. Dry clothes in a dryer. You do not need to disinfect the tub of the washer or tumbler of the dryer.
15. When you are finished handling waste, throw away your gloves and wash your hands.