

# 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 needles

**Store:** Purchase a sharps disposal container from a pharmacy or get an empty laundry detergent bottle with a screw-on lid. 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 all used sharps storage containers out of the reach of children.*



- ▶ Label the empty detergent container: "Do Not Recycle: Household Sharps."
- ▶ Put used needles in point-first into the container.
- ▶ Container should not be more than 1/2 full of needles and lancets before collection or disposal.
- ▶ Keep the cap screwed on the container when not putting in needles.

**Or destroy:** Use a home destruction device that incinerates needles and lancets. These small, portable devices can be used at home to destroy needles 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. ▼



A needle cutter that automatically stores the cut needles while away from home when a disposal container is not available. ►



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.

**MORE DISPOSAL INFORMATION ON BACK**



## 2. Disposal options

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

### Clinics and Hospital Collection Sites

Some clinics and hospitals have collection programs for needles, lancets, and syringes used by their patients at home. Ask your healthcare provider if your clinic or hospital has a collection program. If so, follow their storage and disposal instructions. 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. U.S. Postal Service-approved providers of this service include:



- Medadyne Biomedical, Inc. 714-887-0315 [www.medadyne.com](http://www.medadyne.com)
- Safe Medical Systems 877-722-3633 [www.safemedical.com](http://www.safemedical.com)
- Sharps Compliance, Inc. 800-772-5657 [www.sharpsinc.com](http://www.sharpsinc.com)
- Stericycle, Inc. 800-355-8773 [www.stericycle.com](http://www.stericycle.com)

In Minnesota, it is currently legal to put used sharps that are in laundry detergent bottle with a lid into the garbage, however this is highly discouraged because of the injury and health risks it places on 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!

### For more information



### For general disease-prevention information

Contact the Minnesota Department of Health  
Infectious Disease Epidemiology,  
Prevention and Control Division  
651-201-5414  
[www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us)

### Diabetes information & education

Information on diabetes and sharps disposal:  
American Diabetes Association  
Minnesota  
763-593-5333  
toll-free: 888-DIABETES (342-2383)  
[www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)

### HIV and AIDS prevention and services

Information on 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](http://www.mnaidsproject.org)

Household sharps accepted at the Carlton Co. Transfer Station, 1950 Hwy 210, Carlton.

Hours April - Oct, Mon - Sat 8:30 a.m - 4 p.m. Hours Nov - March, Mon - Fri 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. and Sat 8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

No sharps accepted from businesses, nursing homes, or pharmacies. Question? 218-384-9178

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



Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance

[www.moea.state.mn.us/hhw/](http://www.moea.state.mn.us/hhw/) ▶ 800-657-3864