

Disposal of household-generated sharps

Used needles, syringes, infusion kits or other similar sharps are infectious waste and need to be managed properly to mitigate risk to public health, safety and the environment. While NHDES prefers that sharps be managed by using a container exchange or mailback program, not every household has access to these services. Another alternative is to use a specially-designed needle cutter or incineration device purchased from your pharmacy.

As a last resort, household-generated sharps can be safely placed in your household trash by following a few simple steps:

1. Put the sharps in a rigid, plastic container like a detergent bottle.
2. Screw on the top, and tape it closed with duct tape or similar.
3. Clearly label the container "Medical Sharps - Not for Recycling."
4. Dispose of the container at a facility authorized to accept it.

Not sure who can accept your household-generated sharps? Just ask your solid waste hauler or transfer station operator. Solid waste operators are trained professionals who can help you with a wide variety of disposal questions.

Disposing of sharps in the trash is an exemption for household-generated sharps only. For businesses and other collection locations, NHDES recommends using a container exchange or mailback program. Explore your options by going to <http://www.safeneedle-disposal.org>.

Remember: NEVER throw sharps straight into the trash; NEVER toss them where they can injure someone; NEVER store them in soft, glass, or metal containers; and NEVER place them in recycling bins. By following these few simple tips, we can keep everyone, from your family to your waste handlers, safe. ■

