

# A Guide for Patients

## Proper Disposal of Used Sharps

### What is a sharp?

Sharps is a term for devices with sharp points or edges such as needles, syringes, injection devices, and lancets that can puncture or cut the skin.



### Why is it important to properly dispose of (throw away) used sharps?

Used needles and other sharps are dangerous to people and pets if not disposed of safely. They can injure people and spread infections that cause serious health conditions. In some states, used sharps must be handled and thrown out separately from the household trash.

### How do I find out where I can dispose of used sharps?

- Many states allow sharps containers to be placed in the household trash once filled and sealed, but some do not.
- It is important to follow your community guidelines for the right way to dispose of used sharps.
- Visit [SafeNeedleDisposal.org](https://www.safeneedledisposal.org) for local guidance and requirements on safe sharps disposal.

### If you are not permitted to dispose of used sharps in the household trash, other options may include:

- **Drop box or supervised collection points**, which may include hospitals, health clinics, pharmacies, health departments, community organizations, police and fire stations, and medical waste facilities.
- **Household hazardous waste collection sites** may have sharps collection bin(s) at the local designated waste collection site.

# Do's and Don'ts of Proper Sharps Disposal

## DO these things to safely dispose of used sharps:

-  Immediately place used sharps in a sharps disposal container. FDA-cleared sharps containers are generally available through pharmacies, medical supply companies, healthcare providers, and online. 
-  If you can't get a sharps container, use a heavy-duty plastic household container with a tight-fitting lid, such as a laundry detergent bottle, to dispose of used sharps.
-  Clearly label the container, "Used Sharps, Do Not Recycle."
-  Follow your community guidelines for the right way to dispose of your sharps disposal container.

## DO NOT do any of these things:

-  Do not throw away loose needles and syringes in your household trash or toilet.
-  Do not dispose of your used sharps disposal container in your household trash unless your community guidelines permit this. 
-  Never allow the sharps container to be recycled.

**Always keep sharps containers out of the reach of children.**

You may also visit the FDA's website at <http://www.fda.gov/safesharpsdisposal> for more information about safe sharps disposal.

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