

Needle Disposal

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Seven to ten percent of the U.S. population is diabetic. Diabetics may cap their needles themselves (so that there is no risk of transmission to others while capping), and put the capped needles /lancets in a solid container that is puncture proof. The solid container could be a soft drink can if they use insulin pens with really small needles, or a larger container (bleach plastic container for example). They should make sure that the container is well sealed and thrown into the trash, not in a recycling bin.

For More Information:

- Visit the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) webpage of community options for safe needle disposal <http://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPURL.cgi?Dockey=30006618.txt>.
- Call your local solid waste department or public health department to determine the correct disposal method for your area.
- Ask your health care provider or local pharmacist if they offer disposal, or if they know of safe disposal programs in the area.
- Contact the Coalition for Safe Community Needle Disposal at 1-800-643-1643 Ask about the availability of safe disposal programs in your area or for information on setting up a community disposal program.

The Coalition has identified several types of safe disposal programs for self- injectors. Instead of placing sharps in the trash, self-injectors are encouraged to use any of these alternative disposal methods:

- Drop Box or Supervised Collection Sites - Sharps users can take their own sharps containers filled with used needles to appropriate collections sites: doctors' offices, hospitals, pharmacies, health departments, or fire stations. Services are free or have a nominal fee. Check with your pharmacist or other health care provider for availability in your area.
- Mail-back Programs - Sharps users place their used sharps in special containers and return the container by mail to a collection site for proper disposal. This service usually requires a fee. Fees vary, depending on the size of the container. Check with your health care provider, pharmacist, yellow pages, or search the Internet using keywords "sharps mail back."
- Syringe Exchange Programs (SEP) - Sharps users can safely exchange used needles for new needles. Contact the North American Syringe Exchange Network at 253-272-4857 or online at <http://www.nasen.org/>.
- At-home Needle Destruction Devices - Several manufacturers offer products that allow you to destroy used needles at home. These devices sever, burn, or melt the needle, rendering it safe for disposal. Check with your pharmacist or search the internet using keywords "sharps disposal devices." The prices of these devices vary according to product type and manufacturer.