

Needle Disposal

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Disposal of short needles and lancets used for diabetic care

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.

Safe Disposal for all needles and sharps

For More Information:

- Visit the **Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA)** webpage of community options for safe needle disposal at <https://www.fda.gov/media/82389/download> shown also on the next page
- 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 <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.

DO's and DON'T's

Safe Disposal of Needles and Other Sharps Used at Home, at Work or while Traveling

<https://www.fda.gov/media/82389/download>

Do

- Immediately place used needles and other sharps in a sharps disposal container to reduce the risk of needle-sticks, cuts, or punctures from loose sharps.
- Use an FDA-cleared sharps disposal container, if possible. If an FDA-cleared container isn't available, some organizations and community guidelines recommend using a heavy-duty plastic household container (i.e. laundry detergent container) as an alternative.
- Make sure that if a household disposal container is used, it has the basic features of a good disposal container. (See box at right for more info.)
- Be prepared — carry a portable sharps disposal container for travel.
- Follow your community guidelines for getting rid of your sharps disposal container.
- Call your local trash or public health department (listed in the county and city government section of your phone book) to find out about sharps disposal programs in your area.
- Ask your health care provider, veterinarian, local hospital or pharmacist
 - where and how you can obtain an FDA-cleared sharps disposal container,
 - if they can dispose of your used needles and other sharps, or
 - if they know of safe disposal programs near you.
- Keep all needles and other sharps and sharps disposal containers out of reach of children and pets.



All sharps disposal containers should be:

- made of a heavy-duty plastic;
- able to close with a tight-fitting, puncture-proof lid, without sharps being able to come out;
- upright and stable during use;
- leak-resistant; and
- properly labeled.

Don't

- Throw needles and other sharps into the trash.
- Flush needles and other sharps down the toilet.
- Put needles and other sharps in your recycling bin — they are not recyclable.
- Try to remove, bend, break, or recap needles used by another person. This can lead to accidental needle sticks, which may cause serious infections.
- Attempt to remove the needle without a needle clipper device because the needles could fall, fly off, or get lost and injure someone.

Best Way to Get Rid of Used Needles and Other Sharps:

Step 1: Place all needles and other sharps in a sharps disposal container immediately after they have been used.

Step 2: Dispose of used sharps disposal containers according to your community guidelines.

For more information visit, www.fda.gov/safesharpsdisposal.