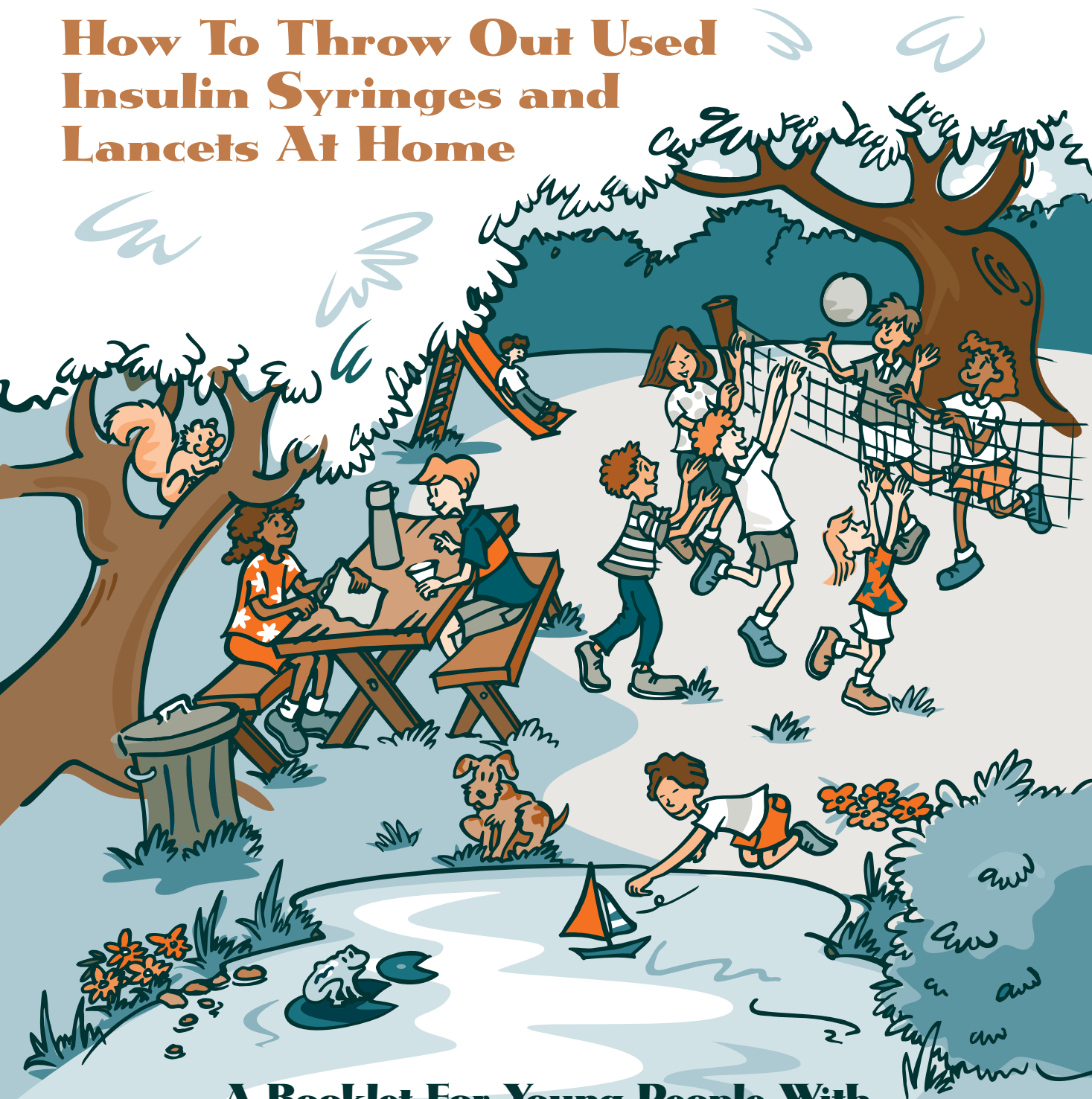


# Handle With Care

## How To Throw Out Used Insulin Syringes and Lancets At Home



**A Booklet For Young People With  
Diabetes And Their Families**

# A Note To Adults

This booklet is for young people with insulin-dependent diabetes and for you.

People living in the United States use more than **one billion** (1,000,000,000) syringes, needles, and lancets **each year** to take care of their diabetes. This booklet shows you the safe way to handle and throw out used insulin syringes and lancets at home.

It's simple. The easy directions on the following pages show you how to protect your family and waste handlers from injury—and help **keep the environment clean and safe!**

While you are reading this booklet, keep in mind that your state, county, or town may have special rules about how to dispose of syringes and lancets. They may also have a special collection center for these items. You should ask your doctor, diabetes educator, or community representative how to find out about any rules or collection programs in your area.



United States  
Environmental Protection  
Agency

November 2003  
EPA530-F-98-025C  
[www.epa.gov/osw](http://www.epa.gov/osw)

## **New Information About Disposing of Medical Sharps**

The Coalition for Safe Community Needle Disposal, comprised of medical, government and waste association and private sector companies, is working with the Environmental Protection Agency to evaluate and promote alternative disposal methods for used needles and other medical sharps.

Improper management of discarded needles and other sharps can pose a health risk to the public and waste workers. For example, discarded needles may expose waste workers to potential needle stick injuries and potential infection when containers break open inside garbage trucks or needles are mistakenly sent to recycling facilities. Janitors and housekeepers also risk injury if loose sharps poke through plastic garbage bags. Used needles can transmit serious diseases, such as HIV and hepatitis.

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 [www.nasen.org](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.

### **For More Information:**

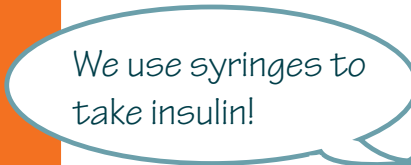
- Call your local solid waste department or public health department to determine the correct disposal method for your area.
- Ask your health care provider or local pharmacist if they offer disposal, or if they know of safe disposal programs in the area.
- Contact the Coalition for Safe Community Needle 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. Visit [www.epa.gov/epaoswer/other/medical](http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/other/medical). This website also offers a list of all state health and solid waste/sanitation department contacts.

# Did You Know?



We use lancets to test our blood sugar level!

People with insulin-dependent diabetes know how important syringes and lancets are for controlling their diabetes and staying healthy.



We use syringes to take insulin!

Most people with insulin-dependent diabetes use syringes and lancets every day. But what do you do with them when you're done?

Like anything else we throw out, lancets and syringes need to be disposed of properly. Otherwise they can end up in places they don't belong, like beaches. And because they have very sharp, pointy ends, they can hurt people by accident, like the person who collects your garbage, someone in your family, or even you!

But there's a simple way you can help protect people and the environment. It's quick and easy!

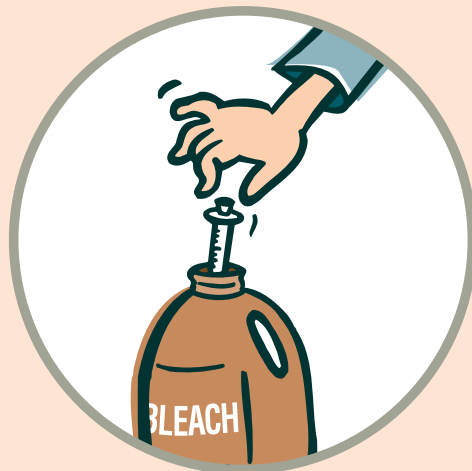
Just follow these **TWO** steps 

Step

1

# Put A Lid On It!

After you've given yourself an insulin shot, put your syringe directly into a strong plastic or metal container with a tight cap or lid. After you use a lancet, you can put it into the same container too.



Don't try to bend, break, or put the cap back on your needle...you might hurt yourself!

Keep your container out of reach of small children and pets!

## Make It Easy

Keep your container in the safe. You usually have your insulin shot to keep your blood sugar.





## Container Do's

The best containers to use are those that:

- ✓ Are made of strong plastic, so needles can't poke through.
- ✓ Have a small opening on top with a cap or lid that screws on tightly to prevent spills.
- ✓ Are not recyclable in your community. Put recyclable containers back into use whenever possible!

Many household items make good containers!



Some examples might include a plastic bleach jug, plastic liquid detergent bottle, or plastic milk jug. You can use a coffee can, too. But when it gets full, close the lid tightly and seal it with strong tape.



## Container Don'ts

- ✗ Don't use glass containers (they can break), or lightweight plastic containers.
- ✗ Don't use any container that will be returned to a store.
- ✗ If you use a recyclable container to dispose of syringes and lancets, be sure it doesn't end up in the recycling bin by mistake. These items are not recyclable, and could affect the safe and effective recycling of other items in the bin.

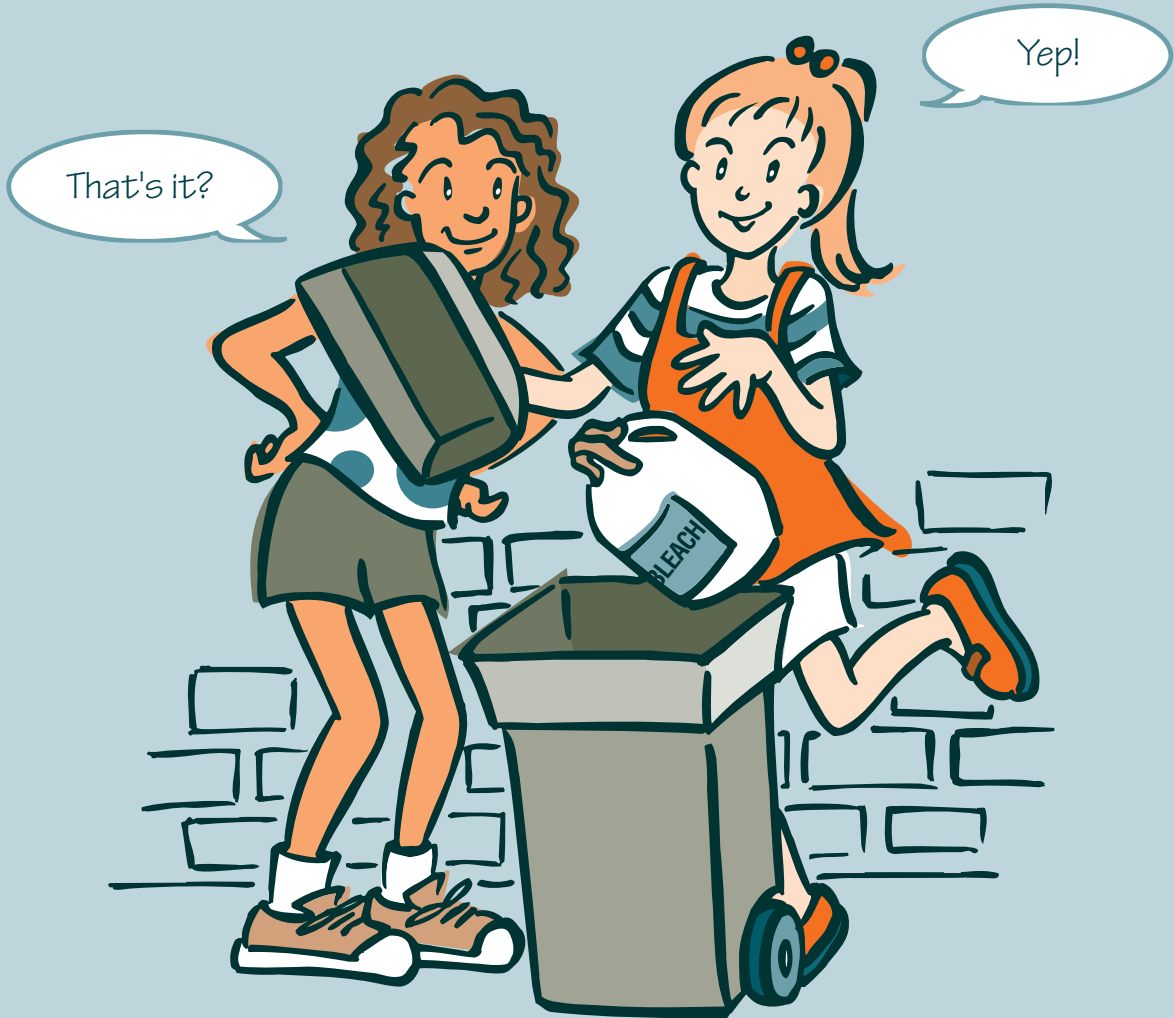
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t or test your

Step

2

## Pitch In!

When the container is full, tightly secure the lid and reinforce it with heavy-duty tape before throwing it in the trash. Be sure not to put it in the recycling bin.





# Word Scramble

1. Put your syringes and lancets into a strong \_\_\_\_\_ or  
(CLIPAST)  
\_\_\_\_\_ container and tighten the \_\_\_\_\_.  
(LATME) (DLI)
2. When it gets full, reinforce the lid with \_\_\_\_\_ and throw  
(PETA)  
your \_\_\_\_\_ into the \_\_\_\_\_!  
(RENTANOIC) (SHART)

CUT OUT THE BOTTOM OF THIS PAGE AND KEEP IT NEAR YOUR CONTAINER AS A REMINDER.



## Remember

### Step 1: Put A Lid On It!

After you use a syringe or a lancet, put it **directly** into a strong **plastic** or **metal** **container** with a tight cap or **lid**.



### Step 2: Pitch In!



When the **container** is full and tightly sealed with heavy-duty tape, throw it out in the **trash**. Don't put this container in your recycling bin.

## **Congratulations!**

Now you know how to handle and throw out used insulin syringes and lancets safely.

## **Pass It On!**

Do you know others with insulin-dependent diabetes? Tell them what you've learned about handling and safe disposal of used syringes and lancets. By spreading the word, you can help others keep the environment clean and safe!

For additional copies of this booklet, please call the RCRA Hotline  
Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Eastern time.  
The national toll-free number is 800 424-9346; for the hearing impaired it is TDD 800 553-7672.  
In Washington, DC, the number is 703 412-9810; TDD 703 412-3323.

This booklet may be photocopied.



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