

# PROPER DISPOSAL OF SHARPS



## Safely Using Sharps (Needles and Syringes) at Home, at Work, and on Travel

“Sharps” is a medical term for devices with sharp points or edges that can puncture or cut skin. They may be used at home, at work, and while traveling to manage medical conditions.

Examples of sharps include:

**Needles** – Hollow needles used to inject drugs (medication) under the skin.

**Syringes** – Devices used to inject medication into or withdraw fluid from the body.

**Lancets** (also called “fingerstick” devices) – Instruments with a short, two-edged blade used to get drops of blood for testing. Lancets are commonly used in the treatment of diabetes.

**Auto Injectors** (including epinephrine and insulin pens) – Syringes pre-filled with fluid medication designed to be self-injected into the body.

**Infusion Sets** – Tubing systems with a needle used to deliver drugs to the body.

**Connection Needles/Sets** – Needles that connect to a tube used to transfer fluids in and out of the body. This is generally used for patients on home hemodialysis.

## How to Dispose of Sharps

Used sharps should be immediately placed in a sharps disposal container. FDA-cleared sharps containers are generally available through pharmacies, medical supply companies, health care providers, and online. These containers are made of puncture-resistant plastic with leak-resistant sides and bottom. They also have a tight fitting, puncture-resistant lid.

## Importance of Safe Sharps Disposal

Used needles and other sharps are dangerous to people and pets if not disposed of safely because they can injure people and spread infections that cause serious health conditions. Safe sharps disposal is important whether you are at home, at work, at school, traveling, or in other public places such as hotels, parks, and restaurants.

Never place loose needles and other sharps (those that are not placed in a sharps disposal container) in the household or public trash cans or recycling bins, and never flush them down the toilet. This puts trash and sewage workers, janitors, housekeepers, household members, and children at risk of being harmed.



## Dos of Proper Sharps Disposal

- **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.
- **Do** use an FDA-cleared sharps disposal container, if possible. If an FDA-cleared container is not available, use a heavy-duty plastic household container as an alternative.
- **Do** make sure that if a household container is used, it has the basic features of a good disposal container.
- **Do** ask your health care provider, veterinarian, local hospital, or pharmacist any questions you have about proper sharps disposal
- **Do** seal sharps disposal containers

## Don'ts of Proper Sharps Disposal

- **Don't** throw loose needles and other sharps into the trash.
- **Don't** flush needles and other sharps down the toilet.
- **Don't** put needles and other sharps in your recycling bin – they are not recyclable.
- **Don't** try to remove, bend, break, or recap needles used by another person. This can lead to accidental needle sticks, which may cause serious infections.
- **Don't** attempt to remove the needle without a needle clipper because the needle could fall, fly off, or get lost and injure someone.