TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Disposing of Syringes from Households: Do's and Don'ts

Protect Yourself, Protect Others: Please Dispose of Needles Properly

Needles and syringes from a household or other place of lodging, such as a motel or hotel, are not considered medical waste, so you can follow general practices recommended for their disposal. For the safety of you and your family, as well as that of custodial and sanitation workers, we strongly encourage you to follow these recommendations when disposing of needles, also known as "sharps." Always exercise caution when handling sharps of any kind. You should also be aware that syringes, needles, and lancets are not recyclable: do not put them in a recycling bin.

Safe Needle Disposal Is Easy

Do's

- Place needles and syringes in a hard plastic or metal container with a tightly secured lid. (The container should be labeled "Syringes," "Sharps," or "Needles.")*
- Keep the container out of the reach of children and pets.
- When the container is full, seal and reinforce its lid with heavy-duty tape.
- Dispose of the sealed container in the household trash.

*Do-It-Yourself Container

- A laundry-detergent or bleach bottle will make a good needle-disposal container.
- Don't use see-through containers.
- Label the container "Syringes," "Sharps," or "Needles."

Don'ts

- Don't use containers made of glass or clear plastic.
- Don't use thin plastics, such as soda bottles, as they are easily pierced.
- Don't put the container in the recycling bin.
- Don't throw loose needles or syringes in your household garbage.

Remember:

- The thicker the wall, the safer the container.
- Never throw loose needles in the garbage. Loose or protruding needles are a danger to everyone, especially trash collectors, because they can cause accidental needlestick injuries that may require, at a minimum, testing for HIV and hepatitis.
- Health-care professionals who provide in-home care must take sharps back to their clinics, hospitals, or places of business to be managed as medical waste. More information regarding medical waste is available at <www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/medicalwaste>.

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