

Disposal of Your Medical Waste

Introduction

Medical waste includes medications, disposable products, as well as items that may contain your body fluids, including blood, urine, and other secretions. We have developed this sheet to help guide you in disposing of your waste properly.

Some disposal regulations vary by state or county. In all cases, if your local requirements are different than these instructions always follow the more stringent of the two. For additional information, contact your home care agency or pharmacy.

Disposal of “Sharps”

- The term “sharps” refers to any needles, or other sharp objects that can puncture the skin. These can also include “spikes” at the top of intravenous tubing.
- Always dispose of all used needles or spikes into the sharps container provided. Any sharp item that has been exposed to blood or other body fluids should also be disposed of in this container.
- Tubing “spikes” that have been used to infuse medications, but have not been exposed to body fluids, can be disposed of with other medical waste.
- Your sharps container must be replaced before it becomes full, to prevent accidental injury to you or your home care nurses. Always notify the pharmacy when it is one-half to two-thirds full.

Disposal of Infusion Supplies

- Disposable supplies that you use with your medication therapy that have not been exposed to body fluids, including blood, may be disposed of with other household garbage.
- However, if they have been exposed to blood or other body fluids they may need to be discarded in a special disposal bag or box. Consult with your home care agency for specific instructions.

Disposal of Medications

- Please follow instructions from our pharmacy for the disposal of unused oral and topical medications.
- Typically our pharmacy will not pick up unused medications. You must dispose of these in your home. Contact your pharmacy for specific instructions.

Disposal of Chemotherapy Waste

- If you are receiving chemotherapy at home, your medical supplies will need to be disposed of carefully. Many chemotherapy drugs are harmful to the environment or to people if direct contact is made with the skin. You may need to use gloves when handling or disposing of this medication. Please follow your nurse's and pharmacist's instructions on the use of chemotherapy (cytotoxic) sharps containers and disposal bags.
- Keep all unused chemotherapy medications and supplies out of reach of children and pets.
- Your home care agency may also have specific and important instructions on the handling or disposal of household items such as linens, eating utensils, bedpans, urinals, and emesis basins.

Special Medical Waste Disposal Instructions

Shown below are special medical waste disposal instructions your pharmacy would like you to know: