

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

## Traveling with Needles

Don't forget, safe needle disposal is important no matter where you are—at home, at work, or on the road. Never place used needles in the trash in hotel rooms, on airplanes, or in public restrooms, where they could injure the cleaning staff or other people.

### Sharps and Air Travel

Before you fly, check the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Web site ([www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov)) for up-to-date rules on what to do with your needles when you travel. To make your trip through airport security easier, make sure your medicines are labeled with the type of medicine and the manufacturer's name or a drug store label, and bring a letter from your doctor.

Be prepared—ask about options for safe needle disposal when you make travel reservations, board an airplane, or check into a hotel or cruise ship. If you aren't sure that needle containers will be available where you're going, be sure to buy a needle container that you can take with you to hold your used needles until you can throw them away the right way.



**EPA**  
United States  
Environmental Protection Agency  
5305W  
Washington, DC 20460  
  
EPA530-F-06-014  
June 2006  
[www.epa.gov/osw](http://www.epa.gov/osw)

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# Protect Yourself, Protect Others

## Safe Options for Home Needle Disposal



**A** 44-year-old trash collector was stuck in the leg with a needle from someone's trash. A year later, he started having stomach pains. His doctor told him that he had caught Hepatitis C, probably from being stuck by the needle. Doctors have not been able to help him, and he is now in chronic liver failure. He will likely die from this disease.

It's not just trash workers who are at risk of needle sticks—it's also your neighbors, children, janitors, housekeepers, and pets. That's why used needles should not be thrown in the garbage.

## Why are used needles dangerous?

Used needles and lancets are dangerous because they can:

- ◆ Injure people
- ◆ Spread germs
- ◆ Spread diseases such as HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, tetanus, and syphilis

**All** needles should be treated as if they carry a disease. That means that if someone gets stuck with a needle, they have to get expensive medical tests and worry about whether they have caught a harmful or deadly disease. Be sure you get rid of your used needles the safe way to avoid exposing other people to harm.



Loose needles in trash

## DON'T

- ◆ Throw loose needles in the garbage
- ◆ Flush used needles down the toilet
- ◆ Put needles in recycling containers

## DO

- ◆ Use one of the recommended disposal methods in this brochure

Remember, not all of the options listed in this brochure are available in all areas. Check carefully to see what options are available near you—it could save a life!

# Recommended Needle Disposal Options for Self-Injectors

## Community Services

## National Services

### Drop-off Collection Sites

Some communities offer collection sites that accept used needles—often for free. These collection sites may be at local hospitals, doctors' offices, health clinics, pharmacies, health departments, community organizations, police and fire departments, and medical waste facilities. Don't just leave your needles at one of these places—make sure the site accepts them, and be sure to put needles in the right place.



### "Household Hazardous Waste" Centers

Many communities have a disposal site already set up that accepts "household hazardous waste" items like used oil, batteries, and paint. In some places, these centers also accept used needles. If your area has a hazardous household waste center, be sure it accepts used needles before you go, and put needles in the right place when you drop them off.



### Residential "Special Waste" Pickup Service

Some communities offer a "special waste" pickup service that collects your full container of used needles from your house. Some services require you to call for a pickup, while others collect used needles on a regular schedule.



### Syringe Exchange Programs

These programs let you trade your used needles for new ones. The group that runs the service will dispose of your used needles safely.



### Mail-back Service

You can buy this service, which comes with a needle container and mail-back packaging. You fill the needle container with your used needles and mail it back in the package that is provided by the company. You have to pay for this service, and the price usually depends on the size of the container you pick.



### Home Needle Destruction Devices

Several manufacturers offer products for sale that allow you to destroy needles at home by burning, melting or cutting off the needle—making it safe to throw in the garbage. Prices vary depending on the product.

Before buying any medical device for home use, be sure it's been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).



## How Can I Find More Information?

- ◆ Call your trash or public health department, listed in the city or county government (blue) pages in your phone book, to find out about programs available in your area.
- ◆ Check the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Web site at [www.cdc.gov/needledisposal](http://www.cdc.gov/needledisposal) for a list of needle disposal rules in your state, along with needle disposal programs near you.
- ◆ Ask your health care provider or local pharmacist if they can dispose of your used needles, or if they know of safe disposal programs near you.
- ◆ Contact the Coalition for Safe Community Needle Disposal at (800) 643-1643 or visit the Web site at [www.safeneedledisposal.org](http://www.safeneedledisposal.org) to find out about safe disposal programs near you.
- ◆ Visit the Earth 911 Web site at [www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org). You can go to the "Household Hazardous Waste" section of the site and search for a needle disposal program near you by entering your ZIP code.
- ◆ To learn more about rules regarding medical waste disposal, consult EPA's Medical Waste Web site at [www.epa.gov/epaoswer/other/medical](http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/other/medical).

## How Can I Find More Information?

Contact the North American Syringe Exchange Program at (253) 272-4857 or visit the Web site at [www.nasen.org](http://www.nasen.org).

For a list of mail-back service companies, contact the Coalition for Safe Community Needle Disposal at (800) 643-1643 or visit the Web site at [www.safeneedledisposal.org](http://www.safeneedledisposal.org). When contacting a mail-back service company, be sure to ask them if the service is approved by the U.S. Postal Service.

For information pertaining to needle destruction devices, please see FDA's Web site at: <http://www.fda.gov/diabetes/lancing.html#5>.