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.

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

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<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>These programs let you trade your used needles for new ones. The group that runs the service will dispose of your used needles safely.</td>
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#### National Services

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| 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. | 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> to find out about safe disposal programs near you.
- Visit the Earth 911 Web site at <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>.
- Contact the North American Syringe Exchange Program at (253) 272-4857 or visit the Web site at <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>. 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/laning.html#5>.