

Handling sharp objects safely at home

This information provides tips for safely handling and disposing sharp objects used for health care at home. By working safely with sharp objects, you can prevent injuries and infections. You will also be doing your part to cut down on environmental pollution.

Types of sharp objects

Items that require special handling and disposal include:

- ▶ needles
- ▶ syringes
- ▶ lancets
- ▶ glass ampules
- ▶ other sharp objects used in home for health care

Types of containers used for disposing of sharp objects

Sharp objects should be placed in hard plastic or metal containers with screw-on caps or tightly secured lids. Examples include:

- ▶ plastic bleach or laundry detergent bottles (the best choice)
- ▶ coffee cans with plastic lids reinforced by heavy-duty tape

Do not use glass or clear plastic containers. Sharp objects should not be placed in containers that will be recycled or returned to a store.

Disposing of sharp objects

- ▶ When your container is three-quarters full, take it to a health care facility for proper disposal.
- ▶ If you live near NIH, bring the container to the hospital.
- ▶ If you use public transportation such as planes or trains to arrive at NIH, return the filled container to your local hospital or doctor's office.

Other precautions

- ▶ Do not recap needles after they have been used.
- ▶ Keep containers with sharp objects out of the reach of children and pets.

If you are unable to return a filled container to a health care facility, or if you would like more information, contact the local Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in your area for guidance on waste disposal.

This information is prepared specifically for persons taking part in clinical research at the National Institutes of Health Clinical Center and may not apply to patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your health care team.

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Questions about the Clinical Center?

<http://www.cc.nih.gov/comments.shtml>

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