

# Dispose of Household Sharps the Safe Way!



Never put loose sharps in the trash, recycling, or toilet. Here's why, and what to do instead.



Each year, American households discard about 3 billion medical “sharps,” including disposable needles, syringes, and lancets. When trashed or flushed, they can injure or infect the public, hospitality workers, and sanitation personnel.

They also cost taxpayers millions of dollars in maintenance problems when they jam recycling and waste management equipment. Most states allow trash disposal in a rigid container, despite the dangers if they escape or puncture the container.

## What to do with used sharps

**Start by asking your health care provider if they can take back your sharps.** If not, try the following:

### Drop off

Find a [local program](#) that collects sharps. Try a doctors' office, hospital, pharmacy, clinic, health department, community organization, law enforcement, fire station, medical waste facility, or municipal household hazardous waste facility.

### Mail-back

Ask the locations listed above whether they provide special containers that can be mailed to a disposal site.

### Residential pickup

Ask your local Solid Waste or Health Department if they can schedule collection by trained handlers. Some companies also offer this service for a fee.

### Syringe exchange programs

Seek out an organization that collects sharps at exchange sites.

### Sharps Container

Some medical waste companies offer [FDA-cleared containers](#) for a fee. Follow the container's disposal directions and ask your local Solid Waste or Health Department about rules for container disposal in your area.



### Last resort

**Home destruction devices:** A variety of products can clip, melt, or burn the sharp part, and separate the syringe or plunger (which can go in the trash).

**Household trash:** If you cannot access any of the options above, and [your state allows](#) trash disposal, place your heavy-duty sharps container in the garbage, away from children and pets. Follow these steps:

1. *Choose a container:* Use a rigid, heavy-duty plastic container with a screw top (e.g., detergent bottle).
2. *Label:* Clearly label the container “DO NOT RECYCLE!”
3. *Fill:* Carefully place used sharps inside, needle side down, until the container is 3/4 full.
4. *Seal:* Screw on the cap and duct tape the top so it cannot be removed.
5. *Dispose:* Use the best method that is available in your area. Do not recycle.