

# Frequently Asked Questions – Massachusetts

## 1. What are “sharps”?

“Sharps” is a medical term for devices with sharp points or edges that can puncture or cut skin. Examples of sharps include:

- **Needle** – a very fine, slender, hollow piece of metal used to inject medication under the skin.
- **Syringe** – a device which a needle is attached to in order to inject medication into or withdraw fluid from the body.
- **Lancet** – also called a “finger-stick,” an instrument with a short, two-edged blade used to get drops of blood for testing. Lancets are commonly used in the treatment of diabetes.
- **Auto injector** – including epinephrine pens – a syringe pre-filled with medication designed to be self-injected into the body.
- **Infusion set** – tubing system with a needle used to deliver drugs to the body.
- **Connection needle/set** – needle that connects to a tube used to transfer fluids in and out of the body. This is generally used for patients on home hemodialysis.

## 2. Why is safe sharps disposal important?

Each year approximately 9 million sharps users will administer at least 3 billion injections outside healthcare facilities. Sharps that are not disposed of safely may cause injury.

## 3. Should I put my used sharps in a container before I get rid of them?

Yes. Used sharps—including those that retract after use or are very small—should ALWAYS be placed in a strong, plastic container that’s sealed before the container is disposed.

## 4. What do I do with my sharps container once it’s sealed?

Residents must take sealed containers to a drop-off site or arrange a mail-back service. Visit [SafeNeedleDisposal.org](https://www.safeneedledisposal.org) for local information. Use the ZIP Code search or click your state to learn about various disposal options.

## 5. What should I do to dispose of used sharps if I live or work or am traveling to an area that does not let me place them in the household trash?

If local regulations do not allow a used sharps container to be disposed of in the household trash, [SafeNeedleDisposal.org](https://www.safeneedledisposal.org) will provide information on alternatives. Options may include taking used sharps to a drop-off site, to a hazardous waste collection site, or participating in a mail-back program.

## 6. Can used sharps—or used sharps containers—be put in the recycling?

No. Used sharps can NEVER be recycled—either on their own or sealed in a strong, plastic container.

## 7. If I use a needle clipper or destroyer to remove the needle from a syringe, can I throw the syringe in my household trash?

Yes, once you have safely removed the needle from the syringe, the remaining plastic piece can be placed directly in your household trash.

## 8. Can I put lancets, or sharps that retract, directly in the trash?

No. Lancets and sharps that retract should be placed in a strong, plastic container prior to disposal, just like any sharps.

## 9. Where can I find more information on sharps disposal?

For more information, visit [SafeNeedleDisposal.org](https://www.safeneedledisposal.org). [SafeNeedleDisposal.org](https://www.safeneedledisposal.org) is a project of NeedyMeds, a national 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization that provides healthcare information to consumers. In addition to information on local guidance and disposal facilities, the website offers a wealth of information, including discussion on the types of sharps, types of container options available to sharps users, and various take back and collection programs available.

