

# California Sharps Disposal Fact Sheet

Each year, approximately 9 million sharps users—or people who use needles, syringes, lancets, auto injectors, injection pens, infusion sets, or connection needles/sets to receive medication—will administer at least 3 billion injections outside of healthcare facilities. People use sharps to manage a wide variety of conditions, including: allergies, arthritis, cancer, diabetes, hepatitis, HIV/AIDS, infertility, migraines, multiple sclerosis, osteoporosis, blood clotting disorders, psoriasis and more. Disposing of used sharps safely is different from state to state and in some cases, locality to locality. This is why it is so important for patients to understand local options.

## Place used sharps in a strong, plastic container

No matter where you happen to be, all used sharps should be placed in a strong, plastic container.

- Sharps should never be thrown loosely into the trash or toilet.
- Sharps that retract after use, or are very small, should be disposed of like all other sharps.
- Sharps should never be recycled.

If you are given a strong, plastic container with new sharps or purchase one at a pharmacy or online, use it to collect sharps after they are used. You may also place used sharps in your own strong, plastic container—like an empty laundry detergent or bleach bottle—until the container is three-quarters full. Then screw the lid on tightly, and use strong tape to further secure it.

## Determine how to get rid of your used sharps container

It is against the law in the state of California to dispose of sharps in the household trash. Residents must take sealed containers to a drop-off site or arrange a mail-back service. Visit [SafeNeedleDisposal.org](http://SafeNeedleDisposal.org) for local information. Use the ZIP Code search or click on the state of California to learn about various disposal options.

## Alternatives to disposal in household trash

Visit [SafeNeedleDisposal.org](http://SafeNeedleDisposal.org) for local guidance on options to dispose of used sharps, which may include:

- **Drop Box or Supervised Collection Points**  
Sharp users may be able to take their filled sharps container to various collections sites, which may include hospitals, health clinics, pharmacies, health departments, community organizations, police and fire stations, and medical waste facilities. Services may be free or have a nominal fee.
- **Household Hazardous Waste Collection Sites**  
Check with your local waste provider to find out if sharps are collected at their site. Then, place your used sharps in a strong, plastic container, take the container to the designated waste collection site, and place it in the sharps collection bin(s).
- **Mail-back Programs**  
An FDA-cleared sharps container (typically provided with new sharps, obtained from a healthcare professional, or purchased at a pharmacy or online) is filled and then placed in a shipping container, which is mailed (in accordance with the U.S. Postal Service regulations) to a collection site for proper disposal. This service usually requires a fee, and fees may vary depending on the size of the container.
- **In-home Individual Disposal Products**  
A variety of products may be purchased to clip off or destroy used needles and make them safe for disposal. Ask your healthcare provider for information about “needle clippers,” “needle destruction devices,” or “needle melting devices” and where to purchase them in your area.

The information contained in this fact sheet is specific to the state of California. How you dispose of used sharps safely may be different, depending on where you live.

Visit [SafeNeedleDisposal.org](http://SafeNeedleDisposal.org) for local guidance and requirements on safe sharps disposal.

