

# Infectious Medical Waste

A HOUSEHOLD GUIDE FOR THE PROPER DISPOSAL OF  
SYRINGES AND SHARPS – APRIL 19, 2021

The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), Bureau for Public Health (BPH) works to protect the public health for all citizens of West Virginia.

Proper disposal of syringes and sharps protects the public and the environment. To prevent injury, illness, and pollution, follow simple steps when disposing of needles, sharp objects and other sharp contaminated materials used in a home health care setting.

## PROPER DISPOSAL OF HOUSEHOLD SYRINGES AND SHARPS

- Always place the following items in a hard plastic or metal container with a screw on or tightly secured lid.
  - Needles
  - Syringes
  - Lancets
  - Other sharp objects that have been contaminated in patient care

**Note:** A metal coffee can may be used if the plastic lid is reinforced and sealed with heavy duty tape.  
**DO NOT USE GLASS OR CLEAR PLASTIC CONTAINERS SUCH AS POP BOTTLES OR WATER BOTTLES.**

- Place the container on a solid surface at the site where syringes and sharps are used to minimize handling.
- Make sure the storage container location is child proof and animal proof.
- Place the sharps in the container immediately after use.
- **DO NOT** try to **RECAP, REMOVE, BEND or BREAK** the needles. This is where most injuries occur.
- When the container is three-quarters (3/4) full, add a sanitizing solution, made by adding one tablespoon of household bleach (5.25%) to one pint of water, then seal the container.
- With a permanent marker, print on the outside of the container in a contrasting color, “**NOT RECYCLABLE - TREATED SHARPS.**” Place the sharps container in a plastic bag and seal it with tape to prevent container leakage.
- Discard sharps container with other garbage.
- The following items should also be disposed in a securely fastened plastic bag before disposing as trash:
  - Soiled bandages
  - Disposable sheets
  - Medical gloves

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

DHHR’s Infectious Medical Waste Program website: <http://www.wvdhhr.org/wvimw/>

DHHR’s Office of Environmental Health Services, Infectious Medical Waste Program: 304-368-2530

