

Diabetes care related sharps disposals during a disaster

Reuse of insulin syringes, pen needles and lancets by individuals during a disaster and safe sharps disposal. *BUT DO NOT SHARE WITH OTHERS*

During disasters individuals may need to reuse their own insulin syringes and lancets. This is not uncommon even during non-disaster times in disadvantaged regions due low availability and or high costs of these important consumables.

If a lancet is not available to draw blood an insulin syringe or pen needle could be used for that purpose. Suitable sites include fingertips, the sides of fingers and ear lobes. Ideally, due to the risk of dirt and infection feet should not be used.

Ideally sharps should be cleaned with an alcohol swab after and before reuse.

Due to the risk of blood borne infections, including serious illness such as HIV/AIDs and hepatitis B and C, **sharps should not be shared between individuals.**

The academic literature has studies reporting sharps reuse. Two examples:

- Using insulin pen needles up to five times does not affect needle tip shape nor increase pain, Puder et al., *Diabetes Res Clin Pract.* 2005;67(2):119–23.
- **Reuse of disposable insulin syringes. 17 T1D subjects reused 111 single-use syringes for 1–80 days, mean 21.3 (range: 2–126) injections. There were no infections or local reactions.** Stepanas et al., *Med J Aust.* 1982;1(7):311–3.

Stated risks in these studies are:

- Increased discomfort due to a distorted needle
- Needle tip may break off
- Fat hypertrophy if prolonged use
- Infection

Irrespective of single use or reuse sharps should be safely disposed of to prevent needle-stick injury to others, including those involved in garbage



If proper sharps containers are not available an alternate option is a thick firm plastic household container, such as a laundry detergent bottle, with a lid that can be taped shut. Soft drink bottles and cans are less than ideal.

Sharps containers must not be over-filled. Ideally, they should be less than $\frac{3}{4}$ full. Place needle points downward, and don't put hands in the bin.



Containers should be labelled accordingly as a sharps bin and a biohazard, and not for recycling. Unless a proper sharps bin is available to dispose of the smaller sharps container, place it in the middle of a bin that is not for recycling.

A document outlining a home-made version from a thick plastic laundry detergent or similar is provided next.



Helping Hand™

Sharps Containers at Home

A 'sharp' is any medical device that could cut or stick a patient, caregiver, or anyone else. There are reasons that your child may have to use sharps while at home. It is very important to know how to throw away (dispose of) syringes, needles and any other sharp device in a safe way. By disposing of sharps in the right way, you are keeping yourself, your child, other family members and your home care worker safe.

Kinds of sharps

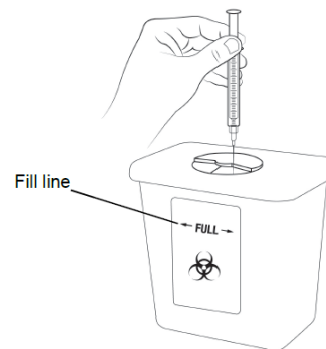
- Needles and needle connectors with attached or fixed needles
- Syringes
- Lancets
- Auto-injectors (like for insulin)

Kinds of home sharps containers

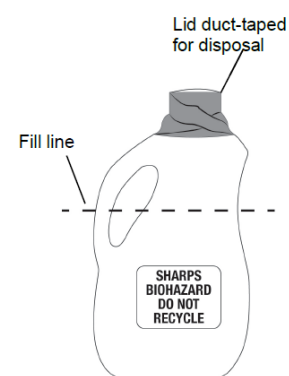
- Medical-issue sharps container (Picture 1)
- Heavy-duty plastic laundry detergent bottle (Picture 2)

How to get rid of sharps at home

1. If you do not have a hospital-issued sharps container, use a container made of heavy-duty plastic. **This can be a laundry detergent bottle or liquid laundry softener bottle.** It must close with a tight lid that screws on. Needles should not be able to poke through (puncture) the lid. The container must be leak-proof, and able to sit up and not fall over (stable).



Picture 1 Medical-issued sharps container with biohazard symbol.



Picture 2 Hard plastic laundry detergent bottle and fill line.

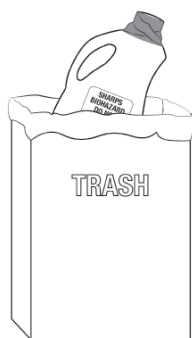
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How to get rid of sharps at home, continued

2. **DO NOT** use milk containers, water bottles, clear plastic containers, glass containers or soda cans.



3. Put the used syringe with the needle into the “sharps” container or a hard heavy-duty household plastic container. Make sure the sharp end, or the pointed end, goes into the container first and is not sticking out of the top of the container.
4. Carry a portable sharps container when traveling.
5. If you are using a household container, close the lid and duct tape it shut when the container gets no more than $\frac{3}{4}$ full. Label the container “**SHARPS - DO NOT RECYCLE.**” Put it in the middle of a full trash bag. **In the state of Ohio**, you are allowed to put the trash bag out for regular trash pick-up. If you live in a state that has a sharps disposal program, take the sealed and marked container to the right disposal center. **DO NOT** put the container in the recycling or return to a store to recycle.



YES



NO

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How to get rid of sharps at home, continued

6. Talk to the doctor and pharmacist when your child gets a prescription for any shot (injection). Some medicine companies have programs that let you mail back your sharps container. See http://www.epa.state.oh.us/portals/34/document/guidance/gd_462.pdf for more information.
7. Keep all syringes, needles, and sharps containers out of the reach of children and others who may misuse them.

Important to know

- Do not let your container get too full.
- Do not re-use needles, syringes or lancets.
- Do not recap the needle.
- Do not touch the needle.
- Do not bend or break off the needle.
- Do not take the needle off of the syringe.
- Do not put your hand in the sharps container **EVER**.
- For more information about safe sharps disposal in your state, go to the FDA's website at www.fda.gov/safesharpsdisposal.

When to call the doctor

- If anyone is stuck by a used needle, call your doctor as soon as possible. Your doctor should let you know if you need treatment.