

Sharps Disposal

If you have diabetes and use needles to inject your medication it is your responsibility to dispose of your needles safely. For example needles to inject insulin, ie a syringe, insulin injection pen or pre-filled insulin pen. Also lancets used to do the finger prick test to check blood glucose. How should I dispose of used needles or sharps?

Why can't I throw them in the bin?

Needles can cause injury to others because they are sharp. Once they've been used, they also carry fluids from your body, such as blood. Used needles can carry infections, such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis B or hepatitis C. A used needle which is contaminated like this can pass an infection on to other people.

Getting a sharps bin

You will need to get a special sharps bin from your GP, this is available on **prescription (FP10)**. You must collect this from the chemist, ask them to assemble the box. When you have filled your bin, you must get a new one from your GP.

A sharps bin is the safest way to dispose of contaminated or used sharps at home. It protects you and any other members of the family and any people involved in the removal of waste from your home.

What should go in a sharps bin?

Your used sharp items.

- Lancets
- Insulin Pens
- Injection Vials
- Needles / Syringes
- Full Needle-Clippers

You should put the needle / sharps into your sharps box in one piece.

Safe disposal in your home

- Keep your sharps bin in a safe place while it's in use, so that it's not a danger to other people. The lid of the sharps bin must not be removed once the bin contains sharps.
- Once you have put a used needle in your sharps bin, do not try to take it out again.
- Dispose of needles and syringes as a single unit i.e. don't dismantle them before putting them in the sharps bin.

- Sharps bins must not be filled above the full line. Do not force sharps into a full bin by pushing down with your hands.
- When your bins are 2/3 you must seal & label the container and use another bin.
- Full bins must be securely stored while awaiting collection.
- What are clippers?
- You can use a clipper to snap off a needle or the sharp part of a syringe. You can use the clipper as a temporary way to keep used needles safe, as the needle stays inside the clipper.
- You cannot use a clipper to break off the sharp part of a lancet, as clippers are not designed to remove lancet needles.
- When the clipper is full, you should dispose of it in your sharps container.
- Clippers are also available on prescription.

Never put any sharps material directly into domestic waste

Disposing of used needles in other ways can cause injury to other people. Do not put used needles: in your household waste bin or any other refuse bin not intended for such items, or in any other container that's no longer needed, for example, drink cans or bottles, or plastic food boxes.

Local sharps collection service

Your sharps are classed as clinical waste, which means that special arrangements apply to their disposal. Using a sharps bin protects everyone and makes sure the waste is treated and disposed of safely. When your sharps bin is full, contact your local authority (download the details below) who will collect it from your home. In some cases you may need to return your box to your practice.