

Disposal of Sharps

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What are sharps?

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How do I dispose of my used sharps?

Never flush sharps down the toilet. Most communities do not allow you to put sharps in your home or community garbage and recycling, even if they are in a sealed container. Sharps can carry bloodborne germs that cause disease. In many counties, it is against the law to throw away sharps in household garbage cans. Though some counties allow the use of makeshift containers like empty 2-liter beverage or detergent bottles, we strongly recommend that you use only approved sharps containers in the home setting.

What are sharps containers?

Sharps containers are usually plastic red containers labeled with the word “Sharps” and a biohazard symbol to identify the contents as a potential danger (see the picture on the left). This is the safest method for collecting and storing used sharps in the home. It is not safe to use empty 2-liter pop bottles—needles can poke through the thin plastic.



Where can I get a red sharps container?

- Check with the pharmacy where you get your child’s medicines and syringes. Many pharmacies sell sharps containers or provide them for customers. Seattle Children’s Ocean Pharmacy has sharps containers for patients picking up needles or syringes for the first time.
- Check the following websites or search the Internet for mail-back programs that provide sharps containers and pick-up service for a small fee:

www.sharpsdisposal.com

- Ask your child’s healthcare provider for a container.

Where do I dispose of my full containers?

Every county and city has different options for sharps disposal. You will need to find out what options are offered in your city or county. If you need assistance with this, ask your healthcare provider. Or, you can try these steps:

- Follow all directions on the official sharps container to close and seal it. If you are using a makeshift container (empty liquid laundry detergent jug), be sure to tape the lid securely.
- Check to see that the container is clearly labeled “sharps” or “biohazard.”
- Check with the pharmacy where you get your child’s medicines. Many pharmacies have drop-off sites for sharps containers.

To Learn More

- Ocean Pharmacy
206-987-2138
- Ask your child's nurse or doctor
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

- Check the websites above for mail-back programs.
- Check with your county public health department or your city public utilities department that handles solid waste garbage for local options to dispose of sharps containers. You can find these numbers on the web or in the local phone book, usually in the community or blue pages. A local librarian is also a helpful resource for locating community resources and phone numbers.
- Ask your healthcare provider if they will accept full sharps containers.

Locations for sharps disposal stations in Washington state

City of Seattle Solid Waste Recycle and Disposal Information Line

206-684-8400

- North Recycling and Disposal Station – 1350 North 34th Street
(Located in the Fremont/Wallingford area)
- South Recycling and Disposal Station – 130 South Kenyon Street

King County Public Health

Main number: 206-296-4600 or 1-800-325-6165 ext.6-4600

www.kingcounty.gov

- Safe and legal disposal of sharps
www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/communicable/hiv/resources/disposal.aspx or
- Disposal of home-generated syringes and needles
www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/ehs/toxic/syringes.aspx

Snohomish County Solid Waste Management Sharps Disposal

No disposal service through the county garbage pick-up or transfer stations. Call 425-388-3425, option 0, and ask for a list of participating pharmacies that provide drop-off services for sharps or visit www.snoco.org, and use the key words: sharps disposal.

For other counties' sharps disposal sites, search the web:

Go to the Washington State Health Department map link to find your county health department: www.doh.wa.gov/AboutUs/PublicHealthSystem/LocalHealthJurisdictions

Use the keywords: sharps disposal, needle exchange programs, biohazard waste disposal, safe needle disposal, metro[city].gov, recycling and disposal stations. For more information on safe needle disposal, visit www.safeneedledisposal.org.

Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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