

# THE PROBLEM...



Each year, tens of thousands of New Hampshire residents give themselves millions of shots for medical conditions such as diabetes, allergies, HIV, arthritis, migraines, etc. Most of these needles and lancets, often referred to as "sharps", are thrown in household, public or workplace trash, or flushed down the toilet. These practices cause a risk of needle sticks to household members, janitorial and solid waste workers, and in some cases, the general public. *Simply recapping a syringe is not adequate to protect against needle sticks.*

Needle stick injuries are a serious public health risk to family members as well as trash disposal workers. Such injuries cost thousands of dollars for medical testing and cause great stress even when victims test negative for HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B and C, tetanus, etc.

## What are sharps?

- Syringes
- Pen and pump needles
- Lancets
- Infusion sets



## Why is the safe disposal of sharps important?

- To prevent injury or illness to others
- To protect waste handlers
- To help decrease pollution in the environment

## Options for Safe Disposal

**MAIL-BACK PROGRAMS:** There are mail-back programs where the user orders a container and, when full, mails it back to the company for proper disposal. There is generally a fee for this reliable and convenient service.



For more information on mail-back programs search the internet using key words such as "medical sharps mail-back", [www.safeneedledisposal.org](http://www.safeneedledisposal.org), or [www.wm.com/products-and-services/residential-other-waste-solutions/syringe-collection.jsp](http://www.wm.com/products-and-services/residential-other-waste-solutions/syringe-collection.jsp)

## SHARPS DESTRUCTION DEVICES:

**Needle cutters:** These devices clip the needle tip off and allow the user to throw the rest of the syringe or pen needle in the trash. When the clipping device is full, wrap it with heavy-duty tape and then dispose of it in your household trash.



**Incineration devices:** This small, portable destruction device can melt needles and lancets in a matter of seconds. The remaining syringe pen needle or lancet can be safely disposed of in the trash. To purchase a needle-cutter or incineration device, check on-line or at your pharmacy.



**When away from home:** Some NH turnpike rest areas and other public restrooms have sharps disposal boxes available.

**CURRENT NH LAW** - The disposal of household-generated sharps is regulated by the Department of Environmental Services (Env-Sw 904.01(b)(3)). It is currently legal for homeowners and renters to put used sharps in the trash if the container:



- is rigid and puncture-proof such as an empty bleach or laundry detergent bottle
- has the screw-top of the container securely taped
- is labeled **DO NOT RECYCLE – HOUSEHOLD SHARPS**

See NHDES disposal tips for household generated sharps at: <http://tinyurl.com/Sharps-Disposal-tips>.

## New Hampshire Syringe Access Initiative:

The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, in partnership with some participating New Hampshire hospitals, sponsors an outreach program for properly-contained disposal of syringes from the community. For further information call (603) 271-0290.

## Diabetes Education Resources:

For individual counseling on the use and proper disposal of sharps, contact a diabetes educator in your area. The NH Diabetes Education Program, Division of Public Health Services also offers other diabetes related information at <http://tinyurl.com/NHDHHS-Diabetes-Edu>.

**Check with your town or city office** to see if a local sharps collection program is offered in your community.

## CAUTION SHARPS USERS!

**NEVER** throw loose sharps into the trash or toilet.

**NEVER** leave sharps anywhere they could injure someone.

**NEVER** store used sharps in glass bottles, soda bottles, milk jugs, aluminum cans, coffee cans or plastic bags.

**NEVER** put containers with used sharps in a recycling bin.

### **INSTEAD:**

- Store your used sharps in a mail-back container (see inside for more details).

Although less desirable, the following method can be used:

- A thick-walled, sturdy plastic container such as one used for bleach, laundry detergent, etc.  
The container should have a tight fitting, screw-type lid which can be used to seal the sharps when half-full.

- Label the container with the words "**SHARPS**" and "**DO NOT RECYCLE.**"

- Seal the container with heavy-duty tape before disposing in your trash.



### The Legislative Commission to Develop Alternatives to the Disposal of Medical Sharps in Household Waste

The information contained in this document was produced by the Legislative Commission to Develop Alternatives to the Disposal of Medical Sharps in Household Waste. The Commission consists of the following stakeholders:

- BD (Becton, Dickinson & Company)
- Granite State Diabetes Educators
- New Hampshire Board of Pharmacy
- New Hampshire Community Pharmacies
- New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services
- New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services
- New Hampshire Hospital Association
- New Hampshire Medical Society
- Waste Management, Inc.



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For additional copies see:

[http://newengland.wm.com/nh\\_sharps.pdf](http://newengland.wm.com/nh_sharps.pdf)

# Don't **STICK** someone else with your **PROBLEM...**



## MEDICAL SHARPS

# Proper Disposal in the Home