

Be Careful When You Throw Out Used Needles

This guide is for people who use needles at home for things like:

- Giving shots to themselves or others
- Testing blood sugar
- Giving intravenous (IV) medicine or kidney dialysis

The Problem with Needles in the Trash...

Even though you may feel healthy, your used needles can hurt others. A used needle thrown into the trash could stick someone. Diseases like HIV and hepatitis are spread by blood.

Anyone can be hurt while handling trash that has used needles in it: your family, small children, and even animals.

Trash collectors can be stuck by needles that are not handled the right way.



Throw Out Needles the Right Way. *It's Easy.*

1. ***Never*** put loose needles in the trash or flush needles down the toilet.
2. After you use them, put needles into an empty, heavy-duty, plastic bottle, like a large bleach or laundry detergent bottle. Write on it with a marker: **Do Not Recycle: Medical Sharps.**
3. When the bottle is full, cap it, seal the cap with strong tape and **put the bottle in your home trash.** Do **not** put it in the recycling bin.
4. If you use a special “sharps box” for used needles, do not dispose of it in your home trash. Call your trash collector for instructions on how to dispose of it.



Other Safe Ways to Get Rid of Used Needles

- Bring needles (in plastic bottle) right to the landfill.
- Join a mail-back program to send your needles away in a safe container. (More information at the Coalition for Safe Needle Disposal—see below)
- Use a device that destroys used needles. (Ask your pharmacist where to order it)
- Ask your doctor or clinic if you can bring used needles to them to throw away.

For More Information

- **Coalition for Safe Needle Disposal:**
(800) 643-1643
- **Virginia Department of Health Hotline for STDs, HIV and Viral Hepatitis:**
(800) 533-4148
- **Thomas Jefferson Health District:**
(434) 972-6220