

What are sharps?

Any type of sharp medical instrument that comes into contact with blood or other body fluids is considered a sharp. This includes any hypodermic needle, syringes with the needles attached, lancets and scalpel blades.

Because sharps can be a health threat, state and local laws prohibit placing loose sharps in your trash.



Sharps Present a Danger

Improper storage and disposal of sharps can lead to injury or potential transmission of infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis and Tetanus.

If you use syringes to treat diabetes, allergies or other medical conditions, the loose syringes you throw in your trash can hurt people or be used illegally.

Proper disposal of sharps help protect you—your family—and the community.

Dispose of needles and syringes properly and carefully

Take these simple steps to protect yourself, family members, sanitation workers and the public from accidental injury or infection.

Do:

- Store sharps in approved containers
- Keep sharps away from children and pets

Don't:

- Place loose sharps in trash
- Flush sharps down toilet
- Clip, bend or recap sharps
- Put sharps container into a recycling bin

If a syringe or needle injures you, seek medical attention immediately.

For more information, contact:

**Environmental Health Division
(253)798-6047**

www.tpchd.org/iw



Safely Dispose of Sharps



**Needles, syringes,
lancets and blades**

Steps you can take

Here are some steps you can take to dispose of sharps properly:

1. Store sharps in an approved sharp container or in a rigid, puncture resistant and sealable container like those used for:

- Liquid laundry detergent
- Cooking oil
- Household bleach



Do not store in:

- Paper or plastic bags
- Cardboard or paper containers
- Glass containers
- Soda bottles, milk jugs or aluminum cans

2. Make a small hole in the neck of the bottle. This allows air to escape.

3. Label your container with a biohazard sticker, or with the words "Sharps—Do Not Recycle," if not already marked.

4. Always drop sharps, needle first, into container.

5. Continue adding until container is 3/4 full. Do not overfill.

6. Secure lid or cap tightly on container.

7. Tape lid closed.

8. Take sharp containers to one of the free disposal sites listed below.

Dispose of your residential sharps for free at:

Tacoma Landfill

Hazardous Waste Drop-Off Site

3510 South Mullen ST (Tacoma)

Pierce County Transfer Station

17925 Meridian E (Puyallup)

South Prairie Transfer Station

11710 Prairie Ridge DR E (Sumner)

Purdy Transfer Station

14515 54th AVE NW (Gig Harbor)

Key Center Transfer Station

5900 Key Peninsula North (Lakebay)

If you are unable to transport your sharps, you may place containers that are marked, closed and sealed in your regular trash can.

Alternatively, mail-back programs are available for home sharps users for a fee. Check with your health care provider or pharmacist, or search the yellow pages or internet using key words "sharps mail back."

What should I do if I find a sharp?

- Use extreme caution when collecting or disposing of sharps.
- Do not attempt to break off the needle from the syringe.
- Avoid picking up sharps with your bare hands. Use gloves and tongs or shovel and dustpan to collect the sharps.
- Follow previously referenced disposal guidelines.
- Contact Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department if you have questions or require assistance.

