

Safe Disposal of Sharps, Needles & Syringes Within the State of Illinois

The only needle disposal program the Coalition for Safe Community Needle Disposal knows of in Illinois is in Northern Cook county and LaSalle county (see details further down the page). The remaining counties follow the state guidelines which allows patients to place used needles/pen needles, lancets (sharps) in a household container such as a laundry detergent bottle, bleach bottle or other opaque sturdy plastic container with a screw-top lid. When that container is full, you should place it in your regular garbage – not recycling.

Though this is still approved in the state of Illinois it is the least desirable way to dispose of used sharps. Please read below for other options you may try before disposing of your container in the household trash.

PLEASE NOTE: If you have your sharps in a red sharps container, these containers are typically not permitted in the regular garbage because they are marked BIO HAZARDOUS MATERIAL. Bio hazardous material is not allowed in the household garbage. In this case it's the actual container that is not permitted – not the sharps.

You may want to ask a healthcare facility (doctor's office, clinic, nursing home, hospital, fire station) if they would be willing to dispose of your container for you. These facilities are not required to take these containers from the public and often won't because of the cost they incur to dispose of medical waste (they typically pay by poundage). But it may be worth a try.

Disposal Options Available to Illinois Residents

Illinois state regulators do not provide written recommendations to syringe users for disposing of sharps. However, individuals who use syringes at home are responsible for ensuring that their used syringes are stored in a way that does not cause a health hazards. To safely dispose of used sharps in the state of Illinois, you may use one of the options listed below to dispose of used needles, lancets, and syringes.

I. Mail-back Programs

Mail-back disposal programs allow home sharps users to mail used sharps to licensed disposal facilities as a safe disposal option. Such programs charge a fee for this service. Check with your health care provider or pharmacist, or search the yellow pages or Internet using key words "sharps mail-back."

II. Needle Destruction Devices

- Devices or containers with mechanisms that bend, break, incinerate (destroy by high heat), or shear needles are called **sharps needle destruction devices**.
- A destruction device that **incinerates** needles and lancets can be used at home to destroy needles immediately after use. These small, portable devices use a few seconds of high heat to melt needles and reduce them to BB-size balls. Previously used only in healthcare facilities, these devices are now available in smaller, less expensive models for home use.
- Once the needle or lancet is destroyed by heat in a destruction device, the remaining syringe and melted metal can be safely disposed of in the garbage (not the recycling container).



A **needle cutter** that automatically stores the cut needles is also useful while away from home when a disposal container is not available. The remains of the syringe after the needle has been clipped can be placed in either a household container or a sharps container (if there is a site available to drop off the sharps container). When the needle clipper is full, simply place it in the storage container (household or sharps container) and dispose of properly.

III. Residents of Northern Cook County and La Salle County

Resident of Northern Cook County: The Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County's *Prescription Drug/Sharps Disposal Program* ensures environmentally-safe disposal and guards against potential theft associated with disposing of old medications. The program is for residentially-generated unused prescriptions, expired over-the-counter drugs, and needles known as “sharps”. No commercial or institutional waste will be accepted and IDs will be checked.

For a complete list of disposal sites: <http://www.swancc.org/recycling/medicinedropoff.html>

Residents of LaSalle County can take their used sharps to the following locations:

Family Pharmacy – Donna Morscheiser

920 West St.
Peru, IL 61354
(815) 224-4555

Peru Police Department – Detective Dennis Potthoff

1727 4th St
Peru, IL 61354
(815) 223-2151

Mendota Police Department – Chief Tom Smith

607 8th Ave
Mendota, IL 61342
(815)539-9331

Ottawa Police Department – Captain Brent Roalson

301 West Lafayette St.
Ottawa, IL
(815) 433-2131

Marseilles Police Department – Officer Jake Callahan

209 Lincoln St Ste. 2

Marseilles, IL 61341
(815) 795-2131

Oglesby Police Department – Asst. Chief Jim Knoblauch
128 W Walnut St
Oglesby, IL 61348
(815) 883-8465



III. Legal, but Less Safe

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Bureau of Land, publishes guidance on its website under the heading “Potentially Infectious Medical Waste.”

In Illinois, it is currently legal to put used sharps that are in a laundry detergent bottle with a lid into the garbage.

However, this is highly discouraged because of the injury and health risks it places on garbage hauler and processing facility workers. It is best to use one of the options previously listed for safe management and disposal of used sharps.

NEVER PLACE LOOSE NEEDLES AND SYRINGES IN THE TRASH!

- Label container “Do Not Recycle.”
- Put sharps in point-first.
- Containers more than half-full should be disposed of.
- Store sharps in closed container with the cap screwed on.

Although placing household generated sharps in the regular trash may be allowable under state rule, some municipalities prohibit this disposal method. Please check with the local authority to determine if this practice is acceptable in your community. You should contact your county or city waste manager, public health official, sanitary department, or environmental health department.

Safe disposal options for needles and syringes

Household generated “sharps” include hypodermic needles, syringes, and lancets. They are typically used in the home for insulin injection or for administering medications to treat other chronic diseases such as allergies, arthritis, osteoporosis, multiple sclerosis, hepatitis B, and HIV.

Managing and disposing of household generated sharps safely reduces pollution to the environment and prevents injury and disease transmission from needle-sticks.

Never leave needles or syringes on streets, in parks, or anywhere else where they could injure someone.

Storage of Used Needles

Store at home

- If you have a medical facility that accepts sharps from the community for disposal, either purchase a sharps disposal container from a pharmacy or ask your specialty pharmacy to provide you with a sharps container (these are typically readily available if you receive your medication through the mail).
- If disposal sites open to the public are **not** available in your area, **DO NOT** use a sharps container. Instead, **USE** an empty laundry detergent bottle with a screw-on lid. (See details later in this document.)
- Do not store used sharps in glass bottles, soda bottles, milk jugs, aluminum cans, or coffee cans.
- If you are bringing used sharps to a clinic or hospital collection site or using a mail-back program, follow their requirements, which may include use of a pre-purchased sharps container.
- Always keep storage containers for used sharps out of the reach of children.

Disposal of Used Needles



Never place **containers** with used needles or syringes in a recycling bin.

Never place **loose sharps** in the garbage.

Do not place sharps in containers with a BIOHAZARD label on the outside of the container in the household garbage. Biohazard material is typically not allowed in household trash. Sharps containers with a Biohazard label are usually treated as medical waste. To find out if your state allows sharps containers in the household trash contact your state waste department for specific regulations on household medical waste.

Clinics and Hospital Collection Sites

- Some medical waste facilities such as, clinics, physician offices, EMT stations and hospitals have collection programs for needles, lancets, and syringes for use by their patients at home. If your healthcare provider has a collection program, learn about and follow their instructions for sharps storage and disposal.

- DO NOT bring used needles and syringes to your clinic or hospital if they do not accept them.

The Bureau of Land also gives contact information for other agencies that may regulate syringe disposal:
Illinois Department of Public Health (<http://www.idph.state.il.us/>) (217) 785-2629.
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Bureau of Land (217) 524-3289.



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