



10 TIPS TO HELP PREVENT INFECTIONS DISPOSAL OF YOUR MEDICAL WASTE

Patient Education

10 TIPS TO HELP PREVENT INFECTION

1. **Wash your hands frequently.** The most effective way to prevent infection is hand-washing. The CDC recommends washing thoroughly and vigorously with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, followed by hand-drying with a paper towel. In the absence of running water, an alcohol-based hand gel or wipe will suffice, although nothing beats "good ole' soap and water. This takes about as long as it does to sing "Happy Birthday", so some hospitals recommend washing your hands for the duration of this simple tune!
2. **Don't share personal items.** Toothbrushes, towels, razors, handkerchiefs, and nail clippers can all be sources of infectious agents (bacteria, viruses, and fungi).
3. **Avoid contact with others who are sick.** Germs can be spread through the air if a person coughs or sneezes for example. When possible, avoid contact with people who are sick to help prevent the spread of infection.
4. **Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.** The current recommendation is to cover your mouth with your arm, sleeve, or crook of the elbow, rather than using your hands. Remember to use good hand hygiene and wash or sanitize your hand afterwards.
5. **Use safe cooking practices.** Bacteria thrive on virtually all food items, and more so on foods left at room temperature. Refrigeration slows or stops the growth of most microbes. Promptly refrigerate foods within 2 hours of preparation. Use separate cutting boards for raw meats and vegetables, keep clean countertops, and wash all fruits and vegetables well prior to eating.
6. **Try to maintain a healthy diet.** Try to eat a balanced diet. Good nutrition is important to help the body resist infection. Eat foods from all the food groups. Drink plenty of fluids - at least 6 to 8 eight-ounce glasses per day (unless your doctor gives you other guidelines). Water, juices and sports drinks are best.
7. **Keep your skin healthy.** Take care of all cuts, scrapes and wounds. Your skin provides a protective barrier against bacteria. Keep all cuts and wounds covered. If they are not healing properly, notify your doctor. If your skin is dry or cracking, apply a moisturizing cream to soften skin.
8. **Try to maintain a healthy lifestyle.** Manage stress levels and try to get eight hours of sleep each night.
9. **Know if your medication increases your risk of infection.** Some medications can increase your risk of developing an infection. Speak with your doctor or contact your Vital Care Rx Pharmacist if you are unsure of your medication's risk.
10. **Call your doctor if you experience any of the warning signs of an infection.** Warning signs may include fever (temperature over 101°F), increased fatigue or weakness, yellow- or green-colored mucus for a few examples.

DISPOSAL OF YOUR MEDICAL WASTE

INTRODUCTION

Medical waste includes medications, disposable products (i.e. needles, syringes), as well as items that may contain your body fluids, including blood, urine, and other secretions. We have developed this sheet to help guide you in disposing of your waste properly.

OPTIONS FOR SAFE NEEDLE DISPOSAL

In an effort to decrease community exposure to needles, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) **discourages** patients from **throwing loose needles in the garbage, flushing used needles down the toilet, or placing needles in recycling containers.**

As a courtesy, Vital Care provides sharps containers at no cost so that our patients can dispose of their needles in a safe and proper manner. As a continuing service, our pharmacy can provide you with a replacement sharps container when your current container is full. Please ask one of our Patient Care Coordinators on your next call.

See reverse side of form for additional important information.

The EPA recognizes that on a national scale states have varying guidelines for the disposal of needles. Variances can even be found on a municipal level where needles are sometimes referred to as Household Hazardous Waste (HHW). If your local requirements are different than these instructions, always follow the more stringent of the two. The EPA and Center for Disease Control (CDC) suggest the following resources to determine the appropriate means of disposal in your community:

- Call your municipality or county refuse department; the number can be found in the phone book government pages or by searching on the internet.
- Visit the Coalition for Safe Needle Disposal website at www.safeneedledisposal.org to find out about safe disposal programs near you.
- Visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/needledisposal for guidelines and needle disposal programs near you.
- Visit the EPA website for additional needle disposal information as it pertains to your community at www.epa.gov/epaoswer/other/medical.



Disposal of “Sharps”

- The term “sharps” refers to any needles, or other sharp objects that can puncture the skin. These can include “spikes” at the top of intravenous tubing.
- Always dispose of all used needles into the sharps container provided. Any sharp item that has been exposed to blood or other body fluids should also be disposed of in this container.
- IV tubing “spikes” that have been used to infuse IV medications, but have not been exposed to body fluids, can be disposed of with other medical waste.
- Your sharps container must be replaced before it becomes full, to prevent accidental injury to you or your home care nurses. Always notify the pharmacy when it is half to two thirds full.



Disposal Of Infusion Supplies

- Disposable supplies that you use for your medication that have not been exposed to body fluids, including blood, may be disposed of with other household garbage.
- However if they have been exposed to blood or other body fluids they may need to be discarded in a special disposal bag or box. Consult with your home care agency for specific instructions.

UNUSED MEDICATION DISPOSAL

Disposal of Medications

- Typically our Vital Care pharmacy will not pick up unused medications - you must dispose of these in your home. Contact your Vital Care pharmacy for specific instructions.
- You may also contact local community pharmacies and city or county government household trash and recycling services to inquire about medication take-back programs

Disposal of Chemotherapy Waste

- If you are receiving chemotherapy at home, your medical supplies will need to be disposed of carefully. Many of these drugs are harmful to the environment or to persons if direct contact is made with the skin. Please follow your nurse’s and pharmacist’s instructions on the use of chemotherapy (cytotoxic) sharps containers and disposal bags.
- Your home care agency may also have specific and important instructions on the handling or disposal of household items such as linens, eating utensils, bedpans, urinals, and emesis basins.

Medication Disposal Information

- Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
Website: <http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/>
Click on: “Buying & Using Medicine Safely” then “Ensuring Safe Use of Medicine”
Telephone: 888-463-6332 or 301-796-3400
Email: druginfo@fda.hhs.gov
- Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)
Website: <http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/>
Click on “Drug Disposal-Got Drugs” in the Quick Links section

See reverse side of form for additional important information.