

The Safe Handling & Disposal of Sharps

What are sharps?

Sharp objects (sharps) include used needles and syringes, razor blades, broken glass, and other used items that could cause a puncture, cut or abrasion.

Why should I be concerned?

Sharps may be found on the trail at any time and particularly during cleanup activities. They pose a significant health concern, having the potential to cause injury or infection.

How should sharps be handled?

- Handle with great care. Thick gloves are recommended.
- Do not attempt to break, bend or cover needles. This is when most accidents occur.
- Dispose of sharps in an appropriate sharps disposal container.

A sharps disposal container:

- Made of puncture resistant, hard shell plastic (not glass or thin opaque plastic).
- Leak-proof, wide-mouthed container.
- Clearly labeled “hazardous materials”.
- Many drug stores and pharmacies will provide suitable sharps containers.

Disposal of a sharps container:

- Do not dispose with your regular household garbage – this is illegal.
- Seal the container with tape and label “hazardous materials” and a list of contents.
- The drug store or pharmacy may take your container.
- Take to your municipal household hazardous waste depot (but call first to check).
- Other options may be hospitals or public health units.

References:

Safe Handling & Disposal of Sharps & Medical Supplies in Home Health Settings, Fast Facts, published by Health Care Health & Safety Association of Ontario, www.hchsa.on.ca

Region of Peel, Public Works, www.region.peel.on.ca/pw/waste/resident/hhw.htm

Town of Richmond Hill, Household Hazardous Waste and Electronic Recycling, www.town.richmond-hill.on.ca/townhall/epw_hazwaste.html