

Community Healthcare Waste Management – Waste from the Home Environment

Who is the booklet aimed at?

This document has been produced as guidance for use in England and Wales only, for those patients who are self-treating in their own home, as well as any relatives or carers looking after patients in their home.

It does not include waste produced by a qualified healthcare worker providing treatment in your home (e.g. GP or nurse). It also excludes Care Homes with nursing care.

Why is disposing of my waste important?

Waste may include items such as: incontinence products, wound dressings and bandages, sharps and medicines. This waste may contain hazards such as bacteria, viruses and toxins. These hazards can pose a risk to you, your family and anyone coming into contact with the waste. Safe handling and management of this waste can reduce this risk and also prevent pollution of the environment.

There are 3 key stages to dealing with healthcare waste that is produced in the home environment, as follows:



Where do I get the waste bags and containers from?

The Local Authority or waste company who collect the waste from your home may provide you with the different coloured waste bags and containers – when you have told them the type(s) of waste that you will be producing. They may also provide you with tags or labels to put on your waste bag/container when it is full

You may also be issued with the different colours of sharps containers directly by the hospital for certain types of treatment (particularly if your waste is cytotoxic or cytostatic).

Your GP may provide you with a prescription for a sharps container (this is often the case for diabetic patients).

For waste medicines you do not need a specific container, you can just take the items to your Local Community Pharmacy, although it may be helpful to put them into a carrier bag or similar.

How do I store and handle my waste?

To handle waste safely you must:

- Handle all waste bags and containers carefully
- Make sure you wash your hands after handling waste or wear disposable gloves (if appropriate)

- Securely tie up all waste bags
- Make sure sharps containers are temporarily closed in between uses
- Not overfill waste bags or sharps containers
- Use the permanent closure on the sharps container when it reaches the fill line.
- When storing waste you must:
- Keep it away from vulnerable people, pets and potential pests
- Keep as securely as possible – e.g. a secure cupboard or shelf out of reach or in a rigid container
- Make sure that the person/company who collect the waste, know where the storage area is and that they can access it easily.

How will my waste be collected/disposed of?

This will vary depending on your Local Authority, GP, Pharmacy and healthcare provider and the different methods for the various waste types are shown in the table.

For waste collected directly from your home your Local Authority may arrange for a waste company to collect this on their behalf. They should contact you before the first collection to make the necessary arrangements and for you to tell them what type and how much waste is likely to be produced.

You may be asked to leave your waste outside for collection in a safe and suitable location, which is not readily visible or accessible to members of the public. If this is not possible you must keep your waste inside your house, it must not be left outside on the street, overnight, prior to collection. The waste collection driver will then knock on your door to collect the waste from you.

It is also essential that you or your relative/carer or healthcare worker cancel collections, when they are no longer required.

Useful contacts

(Please complete for your own reference)

GP Surgery	
Practice or Community Nurse	
Community Pharmacy	
Local Authority/ Waste Contractor	



How do I separate and package my waste?

Waste produced	Additional information	Quantity	Waste stream	Packaging		Collection/disposal
Waste items that are contaminated with body fluids (e.g. faeces, urine, blood, etc.) *	Your healthcare worker (GP, another doctor or a nurse) has told you that you have an infection	Any amount	Infectious clinical waste	Orange bag		Separate collection needed – check with Local Authority or healthcare worker
Waste items that are contaminated with body fluids (e.g. faeces, urine, blood, etc.) *	You have not been told by a healthcare worker that you have an infection	More than 7 kg or 1 – 2 bin bags	Offensive waste	Yellow bag with black stripe		
		less than 7 kg or 1 – 2 bin bags	Your own household waste bin	Household waste bag		Can be collected with your household waste
Waste items that are sharp and have been used with medicines	Needles/syringes that have been used to administer medicines	Any amount	Sharps waste	Sharps container – yellow lid		Take back to your GP OR separate collection needed – check with Local Authority Do not put sharp boxes in refuse sacks or wheeled bins.
Waste items that are sharp and have not been used with medicines (e.g. items used for blood taking/testing)	Needles/syringes that have not been used to administer medicines	Any amount	Sharps waste	Sharps container – orange lid		
Waste medicines	E.g. tablets, creams, liquid medicines, skin patches, etc	Any amount	Medicines waste	Not needed		Take to your local Community Pharmacy
Your healthcare worker has told you that the sharps or medication is cytotoxic or cytostatic		Any amount	Cytotoxic/ cytostatic waste	Yellow container with purple lid		Take back to hospital providing treatment OR separate collection needed – check with Local Authority or healthcare worker

*Excludes items that are usually flushed down the toilet.

PLEASE NOTE: you should not flush incontinence/sanitary products, wipes or protective clothing down the toilet.

