

# Proper Use and Disposal of Needles and Syringes

## Be Smart. Be Careful. Be Aware. Be Safe.

If you're one of the many people in Massachusetts who uses syringes to manage your health care at home, Here's what you need to know about the safe use and disposal of needles, syringes and lancets (sharps).

### Be Smart. Use a Sharps Container.

A sharps container is a single-use container that is filled with used medical needles and then disposed of safely. These can be purchased at pharmacies, medical supply stores or ordered through the mail. If you do not have access to a sharps container, place sharps in a puncture resistant container such as a rigid plastic bottle or coffee can with a secure cap. These items must be disposed of at a drop off site or through a medical mail back service.

- DO** Visit a medical supply store to purchase sharps containers.
- DO** Check out these sharps mail back services. They provide a variety of container sizes and prepaid mailing cartons:
  - **Medasend:** 800-200-3581
  - **Stericycle:** 800-355-8773
  - **Sharps Compliance, Inc:** 800-772-5657

- DO NOT** Put sharps in the household trash. As of July 1, 2012, medical waste regulations do not allow the disposal of sharps in household garbage. Take your filled sharps container to the sharps disposal (drop-off) site in your community. Sharps disposal programs may be ongoing or provided on specific dates, as determined by your city or town.

### Be Careful.

Protect yourself, your community, your environment, and family and friends. The proper disposal of needles and syringes is important!

- DO** Put used syringes in sharps container immediately.
- DO** Keep needles away from children and pets.
- DO** Bring a sharps container when traveling.

- DO NOT** Throw sharps in the garbage or recycling bins.
- DO NOT** Flush sharps down the toilet or drop into storm drains.
- DO NOT** Clip, bend or recap needles.

### Be Aware.

Needles, syringes and sharps containers may not be thrown in the garbage or in recycling bins. See the attached list to find a disposal site for your community. If your community is not listed, please contact your local board of health for information.

### Be Safe.

Reduce your risk of blood-borne diseases like hepatitis and HIV/AIDS.

- DO** Use a new needle every time you inject.
- DO** Clean the injection site with soapy water, alcohol swabs or rubbing alcohol.
- DO** Find out your HIV/viral hepatitis status. Get tested. If you are not infected you can stay that way. If you are, find out how to take care of yourself and avoid passing HIV/viral hepatitis to others.
- DO** Clean your sharps with bleach IF you must reuse them.

- DO NOT** Inject in the same spot over and over again.
- DO NOT** Share needles, syringes, cookers, cotton or water.

**Sale and Possession of Hypodermic Syringes and Needles in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts:**  
M.G.L. c. 94C, § 27 authorizes pharmacies to sell hypodermic syringes and needles to any person, of any age, without a prescription, and without identification.

**State Sanitary Code: (M.G.L. chapter 111, section 127A)**  
Improper disposal of infectious or physically dangerous medical or biological waste may result in penalties of up to \$25,000 or two years in a corrections facility.

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**Be Informed.** Resources are just a phone call or click away. All calls are confidential.

### Syringe Services Programs (SSPs):

You can dispose of used syringes or exchange them for new, sterile ones at any of these sites. You can also be referred to medical help, to substance use disorder treatment, HIV and hepatitis C (HCV) education, risk reduction counseling, HIV, HCV, and sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing, overdose prevention and access to naloxone (Narcan®), and linkage to primary care and case management services. SSPs are free.

As of July 1, 2016, the local board of health in a Massachusetts city or town may approve the establishment of an SSP (SSP Approval MGL C111 S215) in that city or town.

To locate an SSP in Massachusetts, use the link below:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/syringe-service-program-locator>

### Substance Abuse Education and Information Helpline

800-327-5050

[www.helpline-online.com](http://www.helpline-online.com)

### State Agencies:

- **Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)**  
617-292-5500, TTY: 617- 574-6868  
[www.mass.gov/dep](http://www.mass.gov/dep)
- **Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH)**  
617-624-6000  
[www.mass.gov/dph](http://www.mass.gov/dph)  
DPH Bureau of Climate and Environmental Health  
617-624-5757  
[www.mass.gov/dph/environmental\\_health](http://www.mass.gov/dph/environmental_health)  
DPH Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences  
(617) 983-6800  
<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/bureau-of-infectious-disease-and-laboratory-sciences>  
DPH Bureau of Substance Addiction Services  
617-624-5111  
[www.mass.gov/dph/bsas](http://www.mass.gov/dph/bsas)  
DPH Diabetes Prevention and Control Program  
617-624-5485  
[www.mass.gov/dph/diabetes](http://www.mass.gov/dph/diabetes)

### Syringe and Needle Disposal Sites in Massachusetts:

Please look on the list beginning on the next page to find a disposal site near you. Be sure to call ahead for hours and restrictions.

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