

Proper Needle Handling and Disposal Policy

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to protect students, employees, and the general public from needle stick and/or exposure to biohazardous materials via needle stick.

Improper management of discarded needles and other sharps can pose a serious health risk to other students, building service workers, waste handlers, and the general public. For example, discarded needles may expose waste workers to potential needle stick injuries and potential infection when containers break open inside garbage trucks or needles are mistakenly sent to recycling facilities. Custodial staff and housekeepers also risk injury if loose sharps poke through plastic garbage bags.

Student Health Services and Environmental Health & Safety would like to remind the campus community that waste needles, syringes and lancets (personal sharps) used in the administration of personal medications such as insulin and hormones, and used when administering medications to treat chronic diseases such as hepatitis B & C, migraines, multiple sclerosis, psoriasis, etc., must be properly handled and disposed of at all times. The proper disposal of personal sharps reduces pollution and prevents injury and disease transmission from accidental needle sticks. Individuals who use syringes are responsible for ensuring that their clean and used syringes are stored in a way that does not cause a health hazard. Disposing of sharps in the municipal solid waste stream (domestic trash) places college employees, contractors and the campus community at risk for needle stick injuries and infections from accidental exposure.

Things to remember when living in a residence hall and using syringes and needles:

- Both medication and syringes/needles must be stored securely within a student's room (not in a common area or bathroom) and cannot be left unsecured or unattended at any time. Syringes and needles should be stored in a lock box in a student's room or may be stored in another secure area, such as Student Health Services.
- Medication via syringe and needle must be administered in a private area.
- The medication must be administered without the assistance of other members of the community.
- The Office of Residential Life recommends having a discussion with roommates or others within the community regarding the nature of the injections and under what conditions the medication typically needs to be administered. Living in a residence hall is living in a community environment and it's important to be understanding of how other members of the community may react to someone self-administering injectable medication.

Safe Handling of Sharps

The following practices can be utilized to prevent potential needle stick injury from needles and other sharps:

- Always be aware of where the sharp object is.
- Dispose of needles and syringes in puncture-resistant (hard-walled) containers.
 - For medical waste sharps, the sharps waste container needs to have the biohazard symbol and the word "Biohazard." There is no requirement for the sharps container to be red. See below for more information regarding obtaining a sharps container.
- A sharps waste container should be placed as close as possible to the area where sharps are being used in order to facilitate safe disposal of syringes and needles.
- Do not walk around the room with an uncapped needle.
- Place the needle and syringe, without cap, directly into a disposable sharps container.
- Do not break or shear the needle shaft from the hub. This may aerosolize the material.
- Do not bend the needle.
- Do not remove the needle from the disposable syringe.
- Do not re-cap a needle.
 - If you absolutely must re-cap a needle, do not hold the cap while attempting to reinsert the needle.

Use the one-handed "scoop" needle recapping technique:

- Place the cap on a surface (e.g. counter top) and carefully insert needle into cap (do not hold the cap).
- Gently elevate the needle and cap, then push the cap against a hard surface (again, do not hold the cap) to ensure a tight fit onto the device.

PROTOCOL FOR SAFE DISPOSAL OF USED SYRINGES, NEEDLES, AND OTHER SHARP BIOHAZARD MATERIALS

Never throw sharps containers or sharps directly into community garbage cans, residence hall trash receptacles, personal trash cans, or dumpsters. Sharps can puncture regular waste bags and endanger waste-handling workers.

Plastic containers for the disposal of used syringes and needles are available in Environmental Health and Safety. The purpose of this program is to provide a safe means for students to dispose of used medical syringes and needles.

1. Those students who use syringes and needles for medical purposes are invited to contact Craig Kilburn at kilburn_craig@wheatoncollege.edu or call 508-286-5644 to request an approved sharps disposal container.
 - a. There are no forms to fill out, and no personal information is required to receive a container.
 - b. The sharps container is free; the disposal of a full sharps container is free.
2. Place needles/syringes into the container immediately following use.

- a. Sharps disposal containers are only for items defined as sharps. Other waste, such as Band Aids or Kleenex, should be disposed of in the regular trash.
3. Do not overfill or force sharps into the container. **Never rearrange, compress, or "push down" on the contents of any sharps container with your hands!**
4. When full, lock the lid in place, and contact Craig Kilburn for drop-off instructions and to pick up a replacement container.

In the event a person is injured by a needle:

1. Campus Safety must be called immediately at 508-286-3333 and informed of any contaminant possibly present in the needle.
2. The needle or needle/syringe must be disposed of in a red sharps container.
3. Treat the injured party as you would for any other incident. If the person is a student, send them to the hospital for an evaluation. If the person is an employee and is injured while working "on the job", an Incident Form must be filled out immediately, and the person urged to seek medical care.
4. In addition to Campus Safety, Craig Kilburn, Director of Environmental Health & Safety, must be contacted for the necessary paperwork.

Remember:

- NEVER leave personal sharps where they could injure someone.
- NEVER store used sharps in glass bottles, soda bottles, milk jugs, aluminum cans, or coffee cans.
- NEVER place containers with used needles or syringes in a recycling bin.
- NEVER place loose sharps in the trash.
- NEVER place sharps containers with a BIOHAZARD label on the outside of the container in the trash. Labeled Biohazard material is not allowed in the domestic waste stream.
- ALWAYS keep storage containers for used sharps out of the reach of children/pets.