

# SAFE SYRINGE DISPOSAL GUIDE FOR HOME GENERATED MEDICAL WASTE

*If you produce any medical waste at home, this Guide may apply to you.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Home generators of medical waste may account for the use of up to 700,000 sharps daily in New Jersey. The most common disease that requires self-injection of insulin and lancets to monitor blood sugar levels at home is diabetes. Data for 2000-2002 indicates that there are approximately 24,000 individuals over the age of 18 who have been diagnosed as diabetic in the State of New Jersey. *(NJDHSS Center for Health Statistics)* Further, it is estimated that an additional 134,000 individuals in the same age group have diabetes but have yet to be diagnosed. *(NJDHSS Family Health Services)* The proper disposal of home generated medical waste is an important step that all home generators of medical waste can take to help ensure the health and safety of all New Jerseyans.

## **WHAT HEALTH EFFECTS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH IMPROPER DISPOSAL OF HOME GENERATED MEDICAL WASTE?**

The improper disposal of home generated medical waste poses a potential health hazard to many, including family members, sanitation workers, people in the community, hotel housekeeping staffs and school personnel. Although rare, diseases as serious as Hepatitis B and AIDS can also result from accidental needle sticks. In addition, loose syringes thrown into your household trash can also be misused if they fall into the wrong hands. Moreover, these items can injure small children, pets and wildlife.

## **DOES THIS GUIDE APPLY TO YOU?**

The Safe Syringe Disposal Guide (Guide) applies to New Jerseyans generating medical waste at home. These individuals are referred to throughout this Guide as home generators of medical waste. *This Guide also applies to individuals visiting the State of New Jersey*

*Each day, up to 700,000 syringes, needles and lancets are used by New Jerseyans*

## **WHAT IS HOME GENERATED MEDICAL WASTE?**

Home generated medical waste is created through the administration of injectable medications and other invasive or non-invasive procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, syringes, needles with attached tubing and other materials.

## **WHO ARE HOME GENERATORS OF MEDICAL WASTE?**

Home generators of medical waste include any individual who produces waste as a result of medical care in the home (home self-care) through self-administration practices or by a family member or other person not receiving money for their services.

## ***ARE THERE LAWS GOVERNING THE DISPOSAL OF HOME GENERATED MEDICAL WASTE IN NEW JERSEY?***

**Yes.** The improper disposal of syringes or reusable hypodermic needles is regulated by State law (N.J.S.A. 2A:170-25.17). This Statute prohibits any person from discarding disposable or reusable hypodermic needles or syringes, in public or private places which are accessible to other persons (including trespassers) without first destroying the needle or syringe. This means you are responsible for destroying your needles and syringes, even when you visit other people. Violators of this Statute can be fined up to \$500.00 and/or imprisoned or both. *If visiting other states, check their laws to determine whether your medical waste is regulated and the proper disposal methods.*

## ***WHAT ABOUT MEDICAL WASTE GENERATED BY MEDICAL CARE WORKERS IN YOUR HOME?***

Medical waste produced by health care workers (physicians, nurses, home health aides, etc.) as a result of providing medical care in the home is *not* home generated medical waste. It is Regulated Medical Waste (RMW) as defined in the N.J.A.C. 7:26-3A, and must be disposed of by a licensed RMW generator in accordance with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) RMW Regulations. **The responsibility for the proper and safe disposal of regulated medical waste rests with the health care professional providing services in the home.**

## ***HOW CAN YOU SAFELY DISPOSE OF YOUR SYRINGES?***

Several options are available to safely dispose of used syringes generated in the home.

**Household Waste** - Follow these steps to safely dispose of your syringes in your municipal trash. Your syringes must be placed in rigid containers that will protect people from needle sticks and use containers that are unlikely to break open on its way to the landfill.

- 1. Rigid Container** You may use empty laundry detergent bottles or other heavy duty rigid containers with screw-on caps to dispose of needles and syringes. Check with a pharmacy. Ask if it sells commercial containers specially designed to hold sharps for disposal in your household trash.
- 2. Label/Warning** Place a large label with a warning on the empty container. **Example: SYRINGES - DO NOT RECYCLE**
- 3. Needle Clipper** **Clip the needle.** You can buy an inexpensive hand held needle clipper from the pharmacy. **Using anything other than a clipper to break a needle is not safe.** After clipping the needle, carefully place each of your used needles and syringes into a plastic bottle with a screw-on lid. To the extent practicable, the individual receiving the medical treatment should clip the needle and syringe and place them in the container. In cases where this cannot be done due to the limitations of that individual, and a family care giver or volunteer must perform this activity, it is recommended that the individual's physician be consulted first.
- 4. Seal** Seal the bottle tightly with its original lid and wrap well with duct tape over the lid after you fill the bottle with syringes.
- 5. Disposal** You may now dispose of the tightly sealed full container of syringes in your household garbage - **NOT** in your recycling bin. Remember, although you may feel healthy, your used syringes can transmit germs. In addition, loose syringes thrown in your trash can seriously hurt people. We all benefit from the safe disposal of syringes. Please do your part to help keep our environment clean and safe.