

## PHARMACEUTICAL WASTE

Pharmaceutical products are restricted drugs (S4) under the Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation 1996.

Pharmaceutical waste may arise from:

- Pharmaceuticals that have passed their recommended life;
- Discarded pharmaceuticals due to off specification batches or contaminated packaging;
- Pharmaceuticals no longer required by the hospital;
- Pharmaceuticals returned by patients or discarded by members of the public.

Current legislation governs the handling and disposal of pharmaceutical waste from health care facilities, however these requirements do not preside over such wastes generated in a domestic setting. Therefore the following general principles are to apply:

### Do

- ✓ **Dispose of residual pharmaceutical waste generated at the patient's home as general waste.**
- ✓ **Dispose of unwanted pharmaceutical waste contained within the IV bag generated at the patient's home as general waste.**

### Don't

- ✗ **Dispose of pharmaceutical waste generated at the patient's home in a yellow clinical waste bag.**

Remember as the legislation refers to the place of generation of pharmaceutical waste, practitioners providing medical services in a persons home have two options:

1. Dispose of waste through the patients general waste stream; or
2. Place the waste into a sealable, rigid-walled container and return it to the health care facility for appropriate disposal.

DRAFT

#### Tropical Public Health Unit Environmental Health

Zonal Waste Management Adviser  
340 Ross River Road  
Aitkenvale QLD 4814

Phone: (07) 4796 0951  
Fax: (07) 4796 0901

Email: [NZ-Waste-Adviser@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:NZ-Waste-Adviser@health.qld.gov.au)



## Home Dialysis Waste Information for Staff



Queensland Government

Queensland Health

Tropical Public Health Unit  
Environmental Health

## Home Dialysis Solid Waste— What to do with it

### CLINICAL WASTE

The management of clinical wastes generated from Home Dialysis has raised a number of questions in the past, both from staff working within Queensland Health and also from concerned members of the public.

Current legislation governs the handling and disposal of clinical waste from health care facilities, however these requirements do not preside over such wastes generated in a domestic setting. Therefore the following general principles are to apply:

#### Do

- ✓ **Dispose of clinical waste generated at the patient's home as general waste .**
- ✓ **Securely contain waste in a standard plastic bag with sufficient strength to safely contain the waste.**

#### Don't

- ✗ **Dispose of clinical waste generated at the patient's home in a yellow clinical waste bag.**

Note: The yellow clinical waste bags are for clinical waste generated in health care facilities only and must be disposed of in accordance with strict legislation. Clinical waste bags generated from a domestic home and through the general waste stream will ultimately end up on landfill which may lead the public to believe that a local health care facility is inappropriately disposing of clinical waste.

As the legislation refers to the place of generation of clinical waste, practitioners providing medical services in a persons home have two options:

1. Dispose of waste through the patients general waste stream; or
2. Place the waste into a sealable, yellow rigid-walled container and return it to the health care facility for appropriate disposal.

### SHARPS

The definition of a sharp is an "object or device having sharp points, protuberances or cutting edges that are capable of causing a skin penetrating injury to humans".

Present state legislation governing the management of "sharps" generally applies to such penetrating objects generated in clinical areas, and includes sharps generated from medical procedures. As Home Dialysis is carried out in a domestic setting (not in a health care facility) sharps are not required to be disposed of in an Australian Standard sharps container. Therefore the following general principles are to apply:

#### Do

- ✓ **Dispose of sharps in a puncture resistant container that can be secured with a lid (i.e. coffee jar, milo tin).**
- ✓ **Ensure the container is inaccessible to other persons (i.e. children).**
- ✓ **Dispose of container in the patient's general waste bin.**

#### Don't

- ✗ **Dispose of sharps as individual items in the patient's general waste bin.**
- ✗ **Overfill the container as this results in unnecessary needlestick injuries.**



It is often publicised about the finding of needles and syringes in public waste disposal facilities. Research has found that nearly half of needles and syringes disposed of in Australia are generated in the home or non-health care settings, usually by diabetics and IV drug users.

Health care facilities are governed by strict environmental protection legislation and regular audits of health care facility waste have indicated that the inappropriate disposal of sharps is a rare occurrence. Given the number of sharps generated by health care facilities it is recognised that breakdowns in practice can lead to sharps being disposed of inappropriately, however Queensland Health is constantly trying to ensure that all staff are aware of their obligations in regard to the disposal of sharps.

Queries from the general public regarding the appropriate disposal of sharps should be directed to the Environmental Protection Agency in all instances.



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