

# Safe disposal options for household needles and sharps



March 2016

# What is a sharp?

A sharp is any device used to penetrate the skin for healthcare purposes. Sharps include hypodermic needles, pen needles, intravenous needles, *used* epi-pens, lancets and syringes.



# Disposal options

Use one of the following options to dispose of used household needles and sharps. Never place containers with used needles or sharps in a recycling bin.

## Check with your healthcare provider

Some clinics and hospitals have collection programs for household needles and sharps. Check with them first. Do not bring used needles and sharps to your clinic or hospital if they are unable to accept them.

## Destroy at home

Devices or containers with mechanisms that bend, break, incinerate (destroy with high heat), or shear needles are called sharps needle destruction devices.

A destruction device that incinerates needles and lancets can be used at home to destroy sharps immediately after use. They use a few seconds of high heat to melt needles and reduce them to BB-size balls. Previously used only in healthcare facilities, these devices are now available in smaller, less expensive models for home use.



Once a needle or lancet is destroyed by heat in a destruction device, the remaining syringe and melted metal can be safely disposed of in the garbage (not the recycling container).

A needle cutter that automatically stores the cut needles is also useful while away from home when a disposal container is not available. A needle clipper that stores clipped needles should be disposed of at a sharps collection site or through a mail-back program.

## Mail-back programs

Use a mail-in program for needles and sharps

- Stericycle, Inc., 651-644-1480 or 1-800-355-8773
- Sharps, Inc., 1-800-772-5657
- GRP Medical Services, 1-800-207-0976

# Hennepin County's Drop-off Facilities accepts sharps from households only\*

Hennepin County believes it's important to manage and dispose of sharps (needles, lancets, and syringes) safely to prevent injury and disease transmission from needle-sticks.

Sharps from households are accepted at the county's drop-off facilities in Brooklyn Park and Bloomington. You must follow these steps to use the drop-off facilities.

## 1. Prepare your needles and sharps

- Store in a rigid, puncture-resistant, plastic container with a screw-on lid. Examples include empty laundry detergent bottles with screw-on lids. You can also purchase a sharps disposable container from a pharmacy. Do NOT use a glass container.
- Label the empty container, "Do not recycle: Household sharps"
- Put used needles into the container point-first.  
**Note:** Do not put *unused* medicines contained in sharps (epi-pens) in your container.\*\*
- Only fill your container half full of needles and sharps.
- Keep the lid screwed on the container to prevent spills.



## 2. Remember to bring

Proof of residency, such as a driver's license, is required.

## 3. Dispose of needles and sharps at the county's drop-off facilities

Staff will guide you to the needles and sharps drop-off area. Your sharps must be in a proper container, and you will be responsible for placing your container into the drop-off bin.

**Note:** Sharps will not be accepted if not in a rigid, puncture-resistant, plastic container with a screw-on lid. Staff will not handle needles and sharps.



\*Hennepin County does not accept needles and sharps from businesses – which includes healthcare facilities, pharmacies, pharmaceutical representatives, doctors' offices and veterinary clinics.

\*\*Hennepin County does not accept medicines or *unused* medicines contained in sharps (epi-pens) at the county drop-off facilities.

# Hennepin County Drop-off Facilities

## Brooklyn Park

### Brooklyn Park Transfer Station and Recycling Center

*Full and self service areas*

8100 Jefferson Highway  
Brooklyn Park, MN 55445



## Bloomington

### South Hennepin Recycling and Problem Waste Drop-off Center

*Full service only*

1400 W 96th St.  
Bloomington, MN 55431



## Facility hours

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday . . . . .10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Wednesday . . . . .10 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Saturday . . . . .8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Closed Sundays, Mondays and holidays

Open to residents of Hennepin, Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Ramsey and Washington Counties

## What to bring:

- Proof of residency, such as a driver's license or utility bill
- Payment, if applicable – cash, check or credit card

**For the most current facility information** go to [www.hennepin.us/dropoffs](http://www.hennepin.us/dropoffs) or call 612-348-3777.

**Attention** If you want help translating this information, call 612-348-3777

**Atencion** Si desea recibir asistencia gratuita para traducir esta información, llama 612-348-3777

**Ogow** Haddii aad dooneyso in lagaa kaalmeeyo tarjamadda macluumaadkani oo laceg la' aan wac 612-348-3777

**Ceeb toom** Yog koj xav tau kev pab txhais cov xov no rau koj dawb, hu 612-348-3777

TDD/TTY 612-596-6985

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## Hennepin County Public Works

Environment and Energy  
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612-348-3777

