Australian Rheumatology Association

Arthritis AUSTRALIA

Your Guide to Safe Disposal of Sharps

What are sharps and why do we need to dispose of them safely?

Many rheumatology medications are given as injections. These can come in the form of a pen or syringe that need to be disposed of carefully.

All injections or 'sharps', can cause potential injuries and so must be handled and disposed of safely to reduce risk of injury to others. This includes all injectable medicines, i.e. pens and syringes, as well as those that have a retractable needle or needle shield.

Please note, low-dose methotrexate used in rheumatology is not considered chemotherapy and can therefore be disposed of as per this guide.

You should always use the device as directed by your healthcare team.

After injecting the medicine, you must immediately throw away the used syringe or pen into a suitable sharps container. You can obtain these containers from your pharmacy (usually with a fee), sometimes from your healthcare team or local council but most commonly through the pharmaceutical company providing the medication. This is by enrolling in their Patient Support Program. Most companies provide this service free of charge, but it will depend on which medicine you are on. Some local councils may also provide containers or disposal provision – please contact them directly.

Please speak to your rheumatologist, rheumatology nurse, pharmacist or healthcare provider for more information.

Always make sure your sharps are secured in a strong plastic container, for example:

What is a suitable sharps container?

An Australian Standard Sharps container (preferred)

A puncture-resistant plastic container with a screw top e.g. a plastic bleach bottle.



An Australian Standard Sharps container



A puncture-resistant plastic container with a screw top



Glass and cardboard containers are **NOT RECOMMENDED**



Tins are **NOT RECOMMENDED**



Plastic soft-drink/milk containers/water bottles are **NOT RECOMMENDED**

Once the sharps container is full, secure the top by screwing it on tightly or locking (depending on the type of container). Do not overfill.

Please keep these containers out of reach of children.

Do not dispose of your sharps in your everyday rubbish bin.

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Where can I dispose of my sharps?

- **Participating pharmacies** Needle and Syringe Service | Find a Pharmacy
- **Hospitals**
- **Community Sharps disposal** – contact your local council to check local guidelines.

If your doctor advises that you no longer need to use the medicine or it is out of date, take it to any pharmacy for safe disposal. Also, if you have been advised not to use your injection, please take it to any pharmacy for disposal.

Depending on your State and local council guidelines, there may be different requirements.
For further information and to find a drop-off location, see:

ACT www.worksafe.act.gov.au/health-and-safety-portal/safety-alerts/disposal-of-clinical-waste-sharps-and-needles

NSW www.health.nsw.gov.au/csm/Pages/disposal-options.aspx

NT nt.gov.au/wellbeing/hospitals-health-services/needle-syringe-program

QLD www.health.qld.gov.au/public-health/topics/atod/queensland-needle-syringe-program

SA www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/Public+Content/SA+Health+Internet/Services/Mental+Health+and+Drug+and+Alcohol+Services/Drug+and+Alcohol+Services/Drug+and+alcohol+information/Safe+disposal+of+used+needles+and+syringes+%28sharps+disposal%29

TAS www.health.tas.gov.au/health-topics/alcohol-and-drugs/needle-and-syringe-program

VIC www.health.vic.gov.au/aod-treatment-services/needle-and-syringe-program

WA www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/S_T/Safe-disposal-of-needles-and-syringes

Where can I find further information?

Pharmacy Guild of Australia

www.guild.org.au/guild-branches/qld/professional-services/pharmacy-needle-syringe-program

Diabetes NSW

diabetesnsw.com.au/diabetes-resources/sharp-disposal/

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet, please ask your rheumatologist, rheumatology nurse or pharmacist. They will be happy to help you.