

# How to Safely Throw Away Needles at Home

Florida Department of Health



Bureau of Environmental Health

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# A Safe Way to Throw Away Needles

**Every day thousands of people** have to use needles at home to give themselves life-saving shots. But like your life, needles should be handled carefully.

Remember, someone such as a garbage man or sewage treatment worker, housekeeper or child who is stuck with a needle does not know whether this needle can give them HIV/AIDS or Hepatitis B or C. With only a few easy steps, people at home can avoid accidental injury to themselves or to others by throwing needles away properly.

## How to avoid needle sticks:

- DON'T throw loose needles into the garbage.
- DON'T flush, bury or burn needles.
- DON'T put needles into a container that is not strong enough to keep the needles from sticking through the sides.
- DON'T use clear plastic or glass containers.
- DON'T mix needles with things that you recycle.
- DON'T leave needles where other people can get them.

## DO find out if your county has a program to help you.

Many Florida counties have a needle program. A list of these counties can be found at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/community/biomedical/sharps.htm> or by calling 850-245-4277.

## DO find out about a needle mail-back service.

Some companies sell a container that you can use to mail your needles back to the company. More information about companies that have a needle mail-back service can be found at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/community/biomedical/pdfs/providers.pdf> or by calling 850-245-4277.



**If your county does not have a needle program or you cannot use a needle mail-back service,** check with your local garbage company and dump to see if you are allowed to throw your needles out with your household garbage. If this is okay, then:

- Put needles into a container that has a lid and that is strong enough to keep the needles from sticking through the sides, such as liquid detergent bottles or metal cans.
- Throw the container away before it is full all the way to the top.
- Put the container lid on tight and use heavy tape to keep it on.
- Put the container in the center of your garbage.

## Questions or Comments, contact:

**The Florida Department of Health**

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