

“Sharps” include syringes with attached needles and disposable lancets.

One out of every 20 people have diabetes and use an average of two sharps daily.

Six percent of the population of the United States has diabetes. Each year, another 798,000 Americans are diagnosed with the disease.

Michigan ranks fifth in the nation for the highest prevalence of diabetes among adults ages 45 to 64.

Improperly discarded sharps can injure family members, animals, waste and recycling workers, and end up in places where they are a danger to the public, such as our beaches.

Sharps are a hazard because they can be contaminated with hepatitis, HIV which may lead to AIDS, tetanus, and other potentially fatal diseases.



This publication is a cooperative effort between the Drinking Water & Radiological Protection Division and the Environmental Assistance Division, DEQ.

John Engler, Governor ♦ Russell J. Harding, Director

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The Point is . . .



Needles Hurt!

## The environment that is . . .

Health officials estimate almost 16 million Americans have diabetes. That is roughly 6 percent of the population. In Michigan, of those people between the ages of 45 to 64, 8.5 percent have diabetes.\* Many of them use syringes, needles, and lancets to administer home health care.

These “sharps,” if not disposed of in puncture-resistant containers, can:

- ◆ injure waste haulers;
- ◆ increase the risk of infection; and
- ◆ pollute our environment.

NOTICE: Under Michigan’s littering law, it is illegal for a person to improperly dispose of sharps.  
(MCL 324.8905[2])

Home users who produce medical waste can help prevent injury, infection, and pollution by following these simple steps:

\*Source: *Diabetes Self-Management* magazine, November/December 1999 edition.

- ◆ Identify a pharmacy, physician, or dentist office; health or vet clinic; or a hospital that will accept your home-generated medical waste.

NOTICE: Under Michigan’s Medical Waste Regulatory Act, these facilities must handle their medical waste in a manner that ensures safe disposal.

- ◆ If a pharmacy or health facility cannot be located that will accept your medical waste, then home users can place needles, syringes, lancets, and other sharp objects in sharps containers that can be bought from a pharmacy or medical supply company.

- ◆ Other containers that can be used include:

1. An empty coffee can;
2. A laundry detergent bottle; or
3. An empty bleach bottle.

When the container is full, tape the lid down with heavy duct or packing tape. Label the container with the words “MEDICAL WASTE” or “SHARPS CONTAINER” and let your waste hauler know you are placing the waste with your regular trash.

**DO NOT PLACE WITH YOUR OTHER RECYCLABLES.** Make sure that you keep these containers out of the reach of small children.

- ◆ Do not:

- Let small children handle sharps containers;
- Use plastic milk jugs or pop bottles for sharps;
- Flush needles, syringes, and lancets down the toilet. When traveling, package the used materials and bring them home with you for proper disposal;
- Recycle these containers or place with other recyclables.

**For more information, contact:** 

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Drinking Water and Radiological Protection Division, Environmental Health Section, Medical Waste Regulatory Program, at **517-335-8637**, or your local city or county health department.

To determine if there is a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Program in your area, contact the Environmental Assistance Center at **800-662-9278**.