No. 8
Safe Handling and Disposal of Clinical Waste
Any individual or organisation generating clinical waste has a duty of care to ensure that no-one involved in the disposal process comes to harm

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8.1 Training/Competency:

Formal education is provided on Trust induction and annual updates. All staff should also received training during their induction period on correct disposal of clinical waste in the clinical area.

8.2 Introduction:

Large quantities of clinical waste are produced every day from a whole range of workplaces in healthcare. Unless the segregation, handling, transport and disposal are properly managed, such waste can present a risk to the health and safety of people at work, clients/patients, members of the public and the environment.

8.3 Aim:

To provide guidance on the safe handling and disposal of clinical waste generated by the staff and/or healthcare premises of Coventry Teaching Primary Care Trust.

8.4 Equipment Required:

- Yellow clinical waste disposal bags
- Foot operated solid sided rigid clinical waste bins in clinical areas
- Sharps bins conforming to BS7320 and UN3291 and an appropriate size for the area.
- Personal protective clothing, which may include gloves, plastic aprons and eye/face protection

8.5 Definition:

There is a legal requirement for clinical waste to be properly handled, segregated and disposed of depending on its type. Waste, in general can be defined as:
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<th>CATEGORY OF WASTE</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Domestic Waste</td>
<td>Consists of refuse that does not contain offensive or contaminated items (e.g. general household rubbish) and is disposed of via the Local Authority collection service.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| B Clinical Waste | Defined as any waste containing;  
• human/animal tissue  
• blood or other body fluids  
• excretions in some cases  
• drugs and medical products  
• contaminated swabs and dressings  
• syringes, needles and other sharp instruments  
• protective clothing |
| C Confidential waste | Waste that might cause a breach of confidentiality if inappropriately disposed of must be:  
• placed in approved BLACK PLASTIC BAGS, labelled and stored appropriately prior to terminal disposal by an approved contractor.  
If shredded, confidential waste can be disposed of as domestic waste. |
| D Cytotoxic Waste | This must be identified as cytotoxic and disposed of into identified cytotoxic waste bins. This waste must be incinerated. Unused cytotoxic drugs must be returned to the supplying pharmacy in identified bins for disposal. |
| E Pharmaceutical waste | Surplus or out of date drugs. |

**8.6 Clinical Waste Segregation/Waste Colour Coding**

Correct segregation is critical to the safe management of waste and helps control disposal costs. Waste must be sorted at the point of origin so that it can follow appropriate routes for treatment and/or disposal. (HSC 1999).

Waste classified as clinical waste must be placed in a yellow clinical waste bag. Specialist contractors collect it from designated points in the Trust and it is safely disposed of by incineration.

Household waste should be placed in a black refuse sacks. Household waste is not considered to be a biohazard and can enter the normal waste stream.
### 8.7 Clinical Waste Handling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>When handling clinical waste always wear the appropriate protective clothing. (Gloves, plastic apron and eye/face protection if necessary). See Trust Standard Infection Control Precautions Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Handle filled bags by the neck only, keeping away from the body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Know the procedure in the event of spillage or injury. (See below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Never put hands inside clinical waste bags or attempt to push the contents down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Each bag must be filled to no more than 3/4 full capacity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>All staff must be aware of the location of the storage area for clinical waste in their department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>In the event of a bag splitting, do not decant contents from one bag to another. The entire bag and contents must be placed into a new bag.</td>
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<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>The manager responsible for each establishment producing clinical waste must ensure that all disciplines and grades of staff undertake instruction in the safe handling and disposal of waste.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Hands must be washed after handling clinical waste.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### 8.8 Clinical waste packaging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong> Clinical waste must be placed in <strong>yellow plastic bags</strong>, labelled ‘clinical waste for incineration only’.</td>
<td>To ensure appropriate disposal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong> Each bag must be filled to no more than 3/4 capacity.</td>
<td>To prevent bag bursting during handling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong> Clinical waste bags must not contain any sharp objects.</td>
<td>To prevent injury to persons handling the bags.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong> Full sharps boxes must <strong>not</strong> be placed in yellow clinical waste bags. These will be collected separately.</td>
<td>To prevent injury if the sharps box has a spillage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E</strong> If clinical waste requires re-packing e.g. due to damage, do not empty one bag into another. The entire bag and contents must be placed inside the new bag.</td>
<td>To prevent injury or exposure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F</strong> Bags must be securely closed and labelled with point of source.</td>
<td>To ensure that waste is both secure and can be tracked through the chain to disposal.</td>
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**Suggested Method of closure**

With the bag no more than ¾ full, twist the top of the bag several times.
- Fold the twist in two
- Place the tag or label around the double thickness and secure
- Tie firmly to ensure security.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>G</strong> Sack holders for clinical waste bags must be;</th>
<th>To ensure the safe disposal of clinical waste</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Accessible in all clinical and treatment areas and sluices</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Of a suitable size for the bag used</td>
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<td>- Labelled or colour coded to clearly identify contents</td>
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<td>- Have rigid sides and a close fitting lid</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Foot operated</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Washed and dried regularly, inside and out with general-purpose detergent and hot water.</td>
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### 8.9 Clinical Waste Storage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Clinical waste must be stored in a designated area prior to collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Sharps containers in clinical areas must be out of reach of the public. In domiciliary settings, they must be out of reach of children or vulnerable people and animals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>The interval between collections must be as short as reasonably practicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Clinical waste must be kept separate from domestic waste at all times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>The storage area must be locked and inaccessible to unauthorised persons, vermin and free from infestation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>The storage area should be sited on an impervious hard surface with good drainage and subject to routine cleaning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.10 Waste Arising from Home Care

Waste generated in the home as a result of medical or nursing interventions may be defined as clinical or non-clinical waste. The categorisation will depend on a risk assessment by the General Practitioner, who may identify a specific infection risk associated with the illness i.e. blood borne virus, or infective diarrhoea. In these circumstances the waste is clinical waste and special arrangements must be made through the Trust for collection and disposal.

If no such risks are identified, and the quantity of waste is such that it will be contained adequately within a normal weekly collection, the waste may be securely double wrapped and disposed of in the householders’ waste bin by the householder, provided it is free from excess liquid or sharps. The householder must agree to the disposal.

Sharps used in the home environment by a healthcare worker must always be disposed of in an approved container. It must be sealed and removed by the healthcare worker to an appropriate disposal point when ¾ full or at the appropriate interval, unless there had been a special arrangement for collection with the local authority.

The Environmental Agency has decided that the GP will act as a ‘waste producer’ for the patients registered at their practices. Patients who use needles at home should be provided with a sharps container from their GP, which must be returned to the practice for collection prior to incineration.

Sharps containers must be kept out of reach of vulnerable people and animals in the home setting.

If a healthcare worker has concerns or particular queries they should contact the Infection Control Nurse for clarification.

For all clinical waste collections please contact Facilities Manager Coventry and Warwickshire Hospital 024 76246425

NB: All collections require 48 hours notice to set up

8.11 Decontamination of clinical waste spills.

In order to deal safely with spills of clinical waste, which may contain blood or blood stained body fluids or contaminated sharps the healthcare worker should see Policy 7 Guidelines for Dealing with Spills of Blood.

Chlorine based products must not be used directly on to urine spills as excessive fumes will be produced

Chlorine based products are unsuitable for use on fabrics and carpets as they will have a bleaching effect. Blood and any body fluid spills on these items should be cleaned with
detergent and hot water and mechanically cleaned as soon as possible.

It is important to follow manufacturers’ instructions. Dilute only in the appropriate container (available from pharmacy) and discard unused chlorine solution after 24 hours as it will become ineffective after a period of time and produce very strong vapours which may have the potential to cause harm to the care worker.

8.12 Guidelines for Diabetics as highlighted by The Diabetes UK (previously known as British Diabetic Association)

Blood monitoring lancet can be disposed of in the sharps mini-bus. If no immediate access to a sharps bin e.g. at work, make the lancet safe by replacing cap/lid. Dispose of correctly as soon as possible.

For patients using syringes or insulin pens where there is no access to a sharps mini-bus, patients should be advised to firstly safe-clip the needle using a B-D safe-clip devise, and then dispose of it correctly when safe to do so.

Needles Found in a Public Place

In normal working hours:-

- Ask the relevant environmental health department to arrange collection and disposal.

Out of hours:-

- Leave a message at the environmental health department.
- Record incident so it can be followed up the next day.

Remember you have a duty of care to report inappropriate waste disposal under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.
Appendix 1

HEALTHCARE WASTE IN THE COMMUNITY
Waste Arising from the Patients Home or Residential Homes

Does the waste contain sharps?

YES → Place in Approved Sharps container

OR

Human tissue, e.g. products of conception, placental material?

YES → Place in Approved rigid container

OR

Secretions/excretions or items contaminated from patients with known or suspected blood borne viruses or other hazardous infectious conditions?

YES → Place in a yellow Clinical Waste Bag

NO

**Does the waste contain known infection hazard?

YES → Place in Yellow Clinical Waste Bag → INCINERATE

NO

Haemodialysis waste

YES → INCINERATE

NO

WASTE WITH NO KNOWN INFECTION HAZARD;

Is the waste disposable plastic items resulting from home Treatment, e.g. parenteral nutrition, drainage from body Cavities?

YES

Where appropriate empty any excreta, fluid or solid matter into toilet, then double wrap disposable product in plastic bags. Give to householder to place in the domestic waste.

OR

Swabs, sanitary towels, tampons, condoms

YES

OR

Items used to dispose of respiratory secretions, urine or faeces - nappies, stoma bags, incontinence pads that do not exceed a total of one bag full per week?

YES

OR

As above but in excess of one bag full per week

YES → Arrange with collections agency for a special collection from clients home. Ring Facilities (024) 7696

NO

Is the waste pharmaceutical?

YES → Return to hospital or community Pharmacy → INCINERATE

NO

Is the Waste normal household waste, in none of the categories above?

YES → Local Authority Collection → LANDFILL OR INCINERATION
HEALTHCARE WASTE IN THE COMMUNITY
Waste Arising from:

- Healthcare premises, Clinics etc
- Nursing Homes
- Dental Practices
- GP Practices
- Foot Health Clinics

Does the waste contain sharps?

- YES
  - Place in Approved Sharps container
  - OR
  - Place in Approved rigid container
  - OR
  - INCINERATE

Human tissue, e.g. products of Conception, placental material?

- YES
  - Place in Approved rigid container

Secretions/excretions or items contaminated with blood or blood stained body fluids such as; used dressings, swabs, sanitary towels, tampons, condoms, nappies, stoma bags, or incontinence pads?

- YES
  - Place in Yellow Clinical Waste Bag

Items of protective clothing used by the healthcare worker in the care of a patient/client in isolation due to an infectious condition?**

- YES
  - Place in Yellow Clinical Waste Bag

Is the waste pharmaceutical?

- YES
  - Return to hospital or community Pharmacy

- NO
  - INCINERATE

Does the waste contain confidential information that might identify a client, staff member or organisation?

- YES
  - Ring Facilities collection and disposal

- OR
  - Shred then place in the domestic waste

- OR
  - Dispose of into a strong cardboard box lined with a heavy-duty plastic bag for bottles marked Glass or Aerosols

Glass or Aerosols

- YES
  - Local Authority Collection

- NO
  - LANDFILL OR INCINERATION

Is the waste normal household waste, in none of the categories above?

- YES
  - Local Authority Collection

- OR
  - INCINERATION

**If there is any doubt, check with the GP or Infection Control Nurse**
References


Health and Safety Executive (1995) Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR)


HMSO (1991) Environmental Protection Act (Duty of Care) Regulations London


