



## GUIDE TO HANDLING AND DISPOSAL OF HOUSEHOLD MEDICAL WASTE

Every year, Mississippians generate thousands of pounds of medical wastes as health care is administered in the home.

If these household medical wastes are not handled and disposed of properly, there is potential for:

- Injury to other family members, neighbors, and or garbage collection personnel;
- An increase in the risk of infection if persons come into contact with materials such as sharps(i.e. needles, syringes, lancets, glass waste, scalpels, etc.), bandages, dressings, surgical gloves, and other medical waste which have been exposed to infectious agents; and
- Pollution of the environment

If you are receiving health care assistance in your home from a home health care service, you should determine if that service provides waste handling and disposal for sharps, other potentially infectious materials or expired medicines associated with home health care. If your service does not provide such handling and disposal assistance, home health care recipients may request that their health care service provide that assistance or that the service advise you on how you may properly manage and dispose of the waste. Additionally, you may also contact your family physician or local pharmacy to determine if they will accept sharps from patients or customers, or provide sharps disposal containers.

Should your health care service, family physician or local pharmacy not provide disposal assistance, you can help prevent injury, illness and pollution by following some simple steps when handling and disposing of sharps, contaminated materials and expired medicines you use and /or generate in receiving or administering health care in your home.

1. Place all sharps in a hard plastic, puncture resistant container such as a liquid soap, bleach, fabric softener, etc., or into a metal container with a tightly secured lid. If possible, all sharps may be soaked in 1 part bleach to 10 parts water solution since this would help destroy possible infectious agents in the wastes. Do not put sharps into any container that will be recycled or returned to a store and do not use glass or clear plastic containers.
2. Miscellaneous household medical waste (i.e. bloody/soiled bandages and dressings, disposable sheets and clothing, medical gloves, dialysis machine filters, etc.) should be contained in a saturated, with a solution made up of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water.
3. Liquid medicines and solid medicines, such as pills, capsules, powders, etc., should be flushed down the toilet and the empty containers disposed as household garbage.
4. Infectious Waste as these terms only apply to health care facilities licensed by the Mississippi State Department of Health. Sharps disposal containers sold at some pharmacies which contain such labels should be contained in a securely fastened plastic bag prior to disposal.
5. As always, keep medical waste and medicines out of reach of young children and away from pets.