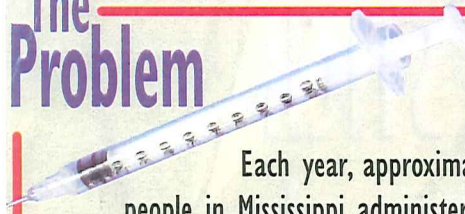


The Problem



Each year, approximately 90,000 people in Mississippi administer to themselves about 30 million injections for medical problems such as diabetes, allergies, HIV, arthritis, etc. Most of these needles, often referred to as “sharps”, are simply disposed of by throwing them in the trash at home, in the workplace or other public places, or by flushing them down the toilet. This practice poses a potential risk of needle stick injuries to garbage collection employees, sewage treatment plant workers, janitors, and in some cases the general public. Even where a used syringe may be recapped, there is the very real possibility that the cap could fall off before the syringe reaches its final disposal destination.

Scores of needle stick injuries have been reported by waste management employees in Mississippi in recent years, and it is believed that many more needle stick injuries go unreported. Such injuries cost waste management companies thousands of dollars for medical testing. Even



where victims are not infected with potential viruses, they usually undergo tremendous stress and worry. While placing syringes in the trash is not illegal in Mississippi, you should do so only if no other options appear available or feasible to you. You may also discuss the issue of needle disposal with your physician.

Options for Safe Home Disposal of Sharps

LOCAL DROP-OFF COLLECTION PROGRAMS

— The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality has established a network of collection



stations throughout the state where the public may drop off their used sharps for safe disposal. These collection stations are located primarily at

local pharmacies or municipal fire stations. There is no cost for this service. Visit the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality website at: www.deq.state.ms.us/medsharps, or call 601-961-5171, for a complete list of collection stations in your area. If there are no local collection stations in your community, encourage your pharmacist or local elected officials to consider establishing a station. The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality has developed guidelines and suggestions to assist persons interested in setting up sharps collection stations. If you use a local drop-off collection station, your sharps **MUST** be safely contained and sealed. Follow the recommendations on the flip side of this pamphlet — (Containing Your Used Sharps).



SHARPS DESTRUCTION DEVICES

— There are devices available which clip or burn the needle off and allow the user to then dispose of the rest of the

syringe in the trash. Such devices may be purchased through your local pharmacist, or you may search the internet to purchase online using keywords such as “sharps destruction devices”.

The clip can be purchased for less than ten dollars and will hold 1000 or more needles. When the device is full, you can take it to a local sharps collection station in your area, or you can seal it by wrapping with heavy-duty tape and then dispose of it in your garbage. The burn devices are more expensive, but may well be the most cost-effective option over an extended period of time.

MAIL-BACK PROGRAMS

— There are mail-back programs available where the user orders a container from a service provider and returns the container when filled with used sharps back to the service provider for proper disposal. While



this service requires some expense to the user, it does provide a reliable and convenient means of safe disposal. Search the internet to shop online for mail-back programs using key words such as

“medical sharps mail-back” or visit the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality website at: www.deq.state.ms.us/medsharps for links to several mail-back service providers.

CONTAINING YOUR USED SHARPS — If none of the disposal options described herein appear practical, it is recommended that used sharps be handled in the following manner before disposing in the trash:

- NEVER throw loose sharps in the garbage or flush down the toilet.
- Store all used sharps in a sharps container which may be purchased at most local pharmacies, OR
- Use a thick-walled, sturdy plastic container such as one used for bleach, liquid soap, washing powder, antifreeze, fabric-softener, paint thinner etc. Rinse the container three times to make



sure it is free of any residual product before using. Do not use soft plastic containers (soda or milk jugs), glass containers, or coffee cans. The container should have a tight fitting, screw-type lid which can be used to seal the sharps when full.

Label the container with the words "SHARPS" and "DO NOT RECYCLE" (not necessary when taken to a local sharps collection station).

- Seal the container with heavy-duty tape before carrying to a local sharps collection station or disposing in your trash.
- Only as a last resort should contained sharps be disposed of in the trash.



**Mississippi Department
of Environmental Quality**

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For more information, or for a
downloadable copy of this pamphlet, go to:
www.deq.state.ms.us/medsharps

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Don't **STICK**
someone else
with your
PROBLEM ...

MEDICAL SHARPS:
Disposal
in the
Home

Mississippi Department
of Environmental Quality

