

Information for patients and visitors

North Lincolnshire Sharps Patient Information Leaflet

**Infection Prevention & Control Team
Community & Therapy Services**

**This leaflet has been designed to
give you important information
about safe use and disposal of
sharps.**



Information for patients and visitors

Introduction

You have been prescribed a sharps container by your healthcare provider. This is for the disposal of used needles / syringes, including pen device needles, lancets, and test strips. If you use needles to inject medication, it is your responsibility to dispose of your needles and medication safely.

What is a Sharp?

Sharps are so called because they are items, which when handled, have the potential to puncture the skin. If disposed of inappropriately they may cause injury and/or infection. Needles, syringes, finger pricking devices, pen needles, lancets and pre-filled injectable syringes e.g. Clexane / Fragmin are all defined as sharps and are considered to be healthcare waste.

Safe Disposal of Sharps

Where patients treat themselves in their own home, it is their responsibility to dispose of any clinical and / or household waste in a safe and responsible way.

Sharps must be disposed of in a rigid plastic sharps container often known as a 'sharps bin'. Sharps containers are prescribed by the healthcare provider initiating treatment when requiring an injectable medication. This may include a Hospital Consultant, General Practitioner (GP) and / or Specialist Nurse.

If the injectable medication prescribed is for life long or long-term use, then your GP (unless otherwise advised) will continue to prescribe a sharps container for the duration of treatment.

What is a Sharps Container?

A sharps container is a rigid plastic container used to dispose of sharps safely and is used

widely across healthcare premises including hospitals, GP practices and for patients in their own homes.

Patients are prescribed a standardized 1 litre sharps container for the disposal of sharps. This will be dispensed by your local pharmacy along with your medication.

How to use your Sharps Container:

1. Ensure the sharps container is fully assembled before use. The lid must be securely fastened to the base of the sharps container and you should complete the assembly instructions with your name and the date the container was assembled
2. Keep it close to hand when you're administering your medication so you can dispose of sharps promptly
3. Do not put any other waste in this container e.g. cotton wool balls or packaging. It is only designed to take sharps e.g. needles, lancets etc
4. Only use this container to dispose of sharps – do not dispose of sharps in your household waste e.g. in drinks cans or plastic food containers as this can cause injury to other people
5. Keep it out of the reach of children and pets. Do not leave the container where it could be easily knocked over
6. Use the temporary closure mechanism on the lid to help prevent spillage of contents when you are not using the container
7. Do not try to retrieve / remove items such as needles and lancets once you have disposed of them in the container

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8. Do not fill the container past the fill line shown on the sharps container
9. Do make sure you have another sharps container available before your current one is full
10. Once full, or when treatment is completed, ensure the lid opening is fully closed. A click will be heard when the lid opening is fully locked and ready for disposal. Ensure you write your name and the date on the sharps container when you lock it ready for disposal. Each unit expires 3 months from the date of opening.
11. Do dispose of your sharps bin correctly by returning it to your GP practice for appropriate waste disposal (sharps containers are collected by a specialist waste contractor and incinerated)

Patients with Diabetes Who Use Insulin

Patients with diabetes who use insulin can administer insulin in a variety of ways. Some continue to inject insulin via an insulin syringe as below.



Insulin syringes should be disposed of in a sharps container as a full unit – needles must not be 'nipped' off.

Many diabetic patients now use insulin pen devices which have a removal needle.



Needles must be removed and disposed of in the sharps container by unscrewing the needle from the pen and / or with an appropriate needle removal device.

Once the needle is removed the pen must be returned to the pharmacy for disposal. This is classed as medicinal waste because of the possible remnants of insulin contained in the barrel of the pen.

Needle free pens can be returned to the pharmacy for appropriate disposal, and must not be disposed of with household waste or recycling.

Patients who use 'Etanercept' Biologic Therapies

Patients' using 'Enbrel' or 'Benepali' auto injectors to self-inject 'Etanercept' must dispose of these devices as a **complete unit** in the sharps container provided by Lloyds pharmacy on delivery of their prescription. Once full the sharps container should be locked (see 10 above).

For this patient group only: Contact Answerphone number: 01724 203813 clearly state your name, address, and postcode and identify where the box should be collected from as per prior arrangement.

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Reference Section

Department of Health (2011) Safe Management of Healthcare Waste.

RCN (2015) Assessing, managing & monitoring biologic therapies for inflammatory arthritis

Concerns and Queries

If you have any concerns / queries about any of the services offered by the Trust, in the first instance, please speak to the person providing your care.

For Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital – you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01472) 875403 or at the PALS office which is situated near the main entrance.

For Scunthorpe General Hospital – you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01724) 290132 or at the PALS office which is situated on C Floor.

Alternatively you can email:
nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust

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01472 874111

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