

# Disease Prevention and Safe Sharps Disposal

To reduce the incidence of blood-borne infections – such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and HIV – health jurisdictions across the nation are working to implement community-wide Safe Sharps Disposal Programs. **The goal is to ensure proper disposal of contaminated needles, syringes, and lancets to prevent accidental exposure to disease-causing pathogens.**

## Problem:

Waste generated in the health care system is highly regulated at the state and federal level. Hospitals and other health care facilities must follow special procedures for handling, transporting, and disposing of medical waste, including used needles that may contain blood. Less attention has been paid to safe disposal of used syringes that come from individuals living in the community. However, as many as 3 billion syringes are used each year outside health care facilities across the nation:

- ◆ It is estimated that between 900 million and 1.68 billion insulin injections and up to 1 billion illegal drug injections occur each year in the U.S.
- ◆ In Shasta County, about 5,000 residents (approximately 1,000+ illegal injection drug users (IDU's) and approximately 4,000+ legal medication syringe users) use between 265,000 and 1.9 million needles, syringes, and lancets per year outside of health facilities to inject medications and other substances.
- ◆ After being used and discarded, most of these syringes end up in the public solid waste system. This presents a risk of needle-stick injury and infection, mostly to solid waste workers, but also to children, pets, and others if sharps are carelessly discarded in public places, such as parks, beaches, or schoolyards.



***“Protecting people from the spread of disease is a core Public Health function. Preventing communicable infections protects individuals, families, and society from the physical, emotional and economic impact of disease.”***

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*



- 36% (254/698) of people tested for HIV (whether result positive or negative) by Shasta County Public Health in 2007 admitted to IDU or being a partner of IDU.
- Shasta County has a higher proportion of HIV positive cases associated with IDU than the state proportion of HIV positive cases from IDU.
- For the past 5 years, Shasta County's rate of new Hepatitis B infections each year has been over 100% higher than California's annual rate. (9.1 cases vs. 1.4 cases/100,000 population based on 2002-2006).
- Since 2000, Shasta County's second most frequently reported communicable disease has been Hepatitis C – which is transmitted primarily by sharing needles. The average number of new reported cases per year (based on 2002-2006) is 286 local residents.
- In 2006, Shasta County ranked in the top 10 counties in California for the incidence rate of new Hepatitis C cases (more recent data is not yet available).

## Solution:

Shasta County Public Health and community partners have explored options to create effective, inexpensive and widely available methods for people to dispose of needles and sharps without putting them in our solid waste system. A variety of low-cost, user-friendly programs that encourage individuals to place used syringes in containers that are collected for treatment as medical waste are being implemented in Shasta County:



- Safe Sharps Disposal Kiosks
- Syringe Mail-Back Program
- Community Collection Events
- Hazardous Waste Facility Drop-Off
- Hospital Drop-Off (Ask your local hospital)
- Pharmacy Drop-Off (Ask your local pharmacy)



## New Law:

- SB 1305 revised the state's Medical Waste Management Act to make it a violation of California state law for home-generated hypodermic needles (sharps) waste to be placed in collection containers like household trash, recycling, or green waste bins. It also requires sharps waste to be transported in an approved sharps container and managed by an approved facility. The law goes into effect 09/01/08.

## Partners:

Shasta County Sharps Disposal Task Force includes interested individuals and agencies working together to encourage and facilitate safe sharps disposal county-wide. Partners include representatives from:

- ◆ City of Redding
- ◆ Waste Management, Inc.
- ◆ Mayers Memorial Hospital
- ◆ Shasta County Public Health
- ◆ Shasta County Department of Resource Management
- ◆ Northern California Type 1 Diabetes Group & Children's Diabetes Support Group
- ◆ Others invited...California Pharmacists Association, healthcare providers, etc.

For kiosk sites, disposal options,  
and links to partners...  
call 225-5591 or visit our website:  
[www.shastapublichealth.net](http://www.shastapublichealth.net)

### Public Health Contacts:

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## Safe Sharps Disposal

- DO** put used sharps in a puncture-proof container with a tight-fitting lid.
- DO** secure the lid with duct tape.
- DO** label the container as "SHARPS".
- DO** keep the container away from children and pets.
- DO** dispose of the container properly.

***DO NOT* throw sharps in  
trash, recycle, or green  
waste bins!**