

# THE POINT IS... **NEEDLES HURT**

“Sharps” include needles, syringes, and lancets used by diabetics to check blood glucose levels and administer home healthcare. In Michigan, 2019 survey statistics estimated approximately 870,000 adults (age 18 and over) have diabetes.\* In addition, many patients with cancer, arthritis, and other chronic diseases generate sharps as a medical waste with their self-administered home health care.

These “sharps,” if not disposed of in puncture-resistant containers, can:

- Injure waste haulers.
- Pollute our environment.
- Increase the risk of infection.

Notice: Under Michigan’s littering law, it is illegal for a person to dispose of sharps improperly. (MCL 324.8905[2])



## HOME USERS WHO PRODUCE MEDICAL WASTE CAN HELP PREVENT INJURY, INFECTION, AND POLLUTION BY FOLLOWING THESE SIMPLE STEPS:

- Contact their local health department, county waste authority, or household hazardous waste collection program to see if they will collect sharps for safe and proper disposal. You can also check the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy, Medical Waste Regulatory Program’s website where a list of community service collection programs is maintained by county. The website can be found at [Michigan.gov/EGLEMedWaste](https://Michigan.gov/EGLEMedWaste).

- Identify a pharmacy, physician, dentist, veterinarian, health clinic, or a hospital that will accept your sharps and properly dispose of them with their sharps.

NOTICE: Under Michigan’s Medical Waste Regulatory Act, these facilities must ensure safe disposal of their medical waste.

Contact a medical waste collection company and see if they will accept your sharps waste. A list of collection companies can be found on the Medical Waste Regulatory Program’s website listed above.

- Contract with a U.S. Postal Service approved mail-back service. These companies will provide you with containers and directions on packaging your sharps waste so it can be returned to the company through the U.S. mail. A list of these companies can be obtained from the Coalition for Safe Community Needle Disposal at (800) 643-1643 or visit the website [SafeNeedleDisposal.org](https://SafeNeedleDisposal.org).
- Purchase a product that allows you to destroy needles at home by burning, melting, or cutting off the needle - making it safe to throw in the garbage. A listing of companies that make home needle destruction devices from the Coalition for Safe Community Needle Disposal, phone number and website address listed above.

\*Source: Michigan Department of Health and Human Services: 2019 Fast Facts About Diabetes in Michigan

- Do not place sharps in a recyclable plastic or glass container and send them to a recycling center.
- Do not let small children handle or play with sharps containers.
- Do not flush needles, syringes, and lancets down the toilet.
- Do not discard needles or lancets in the hotel, airline, or cruise line trash when traveling. Ask if a sharps container is available or package the used sharps in a puncture resistant container and bring them home with you for proper disposal.

Sharps are used to treat:

- |                        |                |                      |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| • Allergies            | • Migraines    | • Hepatitis          |
| • Cancer               | • Osteoporosis | • Infertility        |
| • Erectile Dysfunction | • Arthritis    | • Multiple Sclerosis |
| • HIV/AIDS             | • Diabetes     | • Psoriasis          |



One out of every 10 people in Michigan has diabetes and uses an average of two sharps daily.

People at the greatest risk of suffering a needle stick injury include sanitation and sewage treatment plant workers, janitors, housekeepers, and children.

Needle stick injury victims may suffer anxiety, depression, disease monitoring, and possible long-term infectious disease treatment.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy, Materials Management Division, Medical Waste Regulatory Program at 517-230-9800.

To learn if there is a sharps collection program in your area, contact the EGLE Environmental Assistance Center at 800-662-9278 or visit the Medical Waste Regulatory Program’s website at [Michigan.gov/EGLEMedWaste](https://Michigan.gov/EGLEMedWaste).