

Infection Control in the Home

Every year, Americans use over one billion sharp objects as part of their home care treatments. These "**Sharps**" include lancets, needles, syringes, razor blades and disposable razors. Contaminated materials such as bandages, dressings or surgical gloves can pollute the environment as well as spread infection. If not disposed of properly, these items can injure trash handlers, family members and others who could come in contact with "**Contaminated**" materials.

While receiving home-care, your nurse will instruct you in proper infection control methods to use. Once you have been discharged from the agency, you will need to continue with these methods, to prevent spreading infections to other family members and neighbors.

You can help control infection by following these guidelines:

- Wash your hands thoroughly after handling any type of equipment, sharps, soiled laundry or contaminated materials.
- Dispose of items that are not considered sharps in waterproof (plastic) bags. Fasten the bag securely. Dispose of bag in the trash. (Items which are not sharp including: paper cups, tissues, dressings, bandages, plastic equipment, urinary/suction catheters, disposable diapers, chux, plastic tubing, etc.)
- Soiled laundry should be washed apart from other household laundry in hot soapy water. Handle these items as little as possible to avoid spreading germs. Household bleach should be added if viral contamination is present. (Items which are not thrown away including: dishes, thermometers, commode, walkers, wheelchairs, bath seats, suction machines, oxygen equipment, mattresses, etc.)
- Equipment utilized by the patient should be cleaned every day. Small items (except thermometers) should be washed in hot soapy water and dried with clean towels. Household cleaners such as Lysol or diluted bleach may be used to wipe off equipment. Follow equipment cleaning instructions and ask your nurse/therapist for clarification.
- Thermometers should be wiped with alcohol before and after each use.
- Liquids may be discarded in the toilet and the container cleaned with hot, soapy water rinsed with boiling water and allowed to dry, providing you are not on a septic system.

Sharp Objects:

Place used "sharps" (syringes, needles etc.) directly into a clean rigid container with a resealable lid. Use a hard plastic container designated for sharps. These can be obtained from your drug store, physician office, local Paramedics, or local health department. Please check with your nurse where you can obtain one. Never overfill the containers or recap needles once used. Do not use glass or clear plastic containers and

never put "sharps" in containers that will be recycled or returned to a store. Seal the container with tape and dispose of according to area regulations. Discuss this with your nurse.

Spills in the Home:

Blood/body substance spills are cleaned by putting on gloves and wiping fluid with paper towels. Use a cleaning solution of household bleach and water (1 cup of bleach to 10 cups of water) to wipe the area again. Double bag used paper towels and dispose of in the trash.

You will be given community resources that are specific to your community by your Nurse as appropriate.