

INFECTION CONTROL · GP PRACTICES & CARE HOMES

Clinical waste & sharps: the colour-coded guide

Which bin, which bag, and how to handle sharps safely. Based on the colour coding set out in Health Technical Memorandum 07-01, the national guide to the safe management of healthcare waste.

Colour coding at a glance

Colour	Typically used for
Yellow	Infectious waste that needs incineration, for example waste contaminated with medicines
Orange	Infectious waste that can be treated, for example soiled dressings and items contaminated with blood or body fluids
Purple	Cytotoxic and cytostatic waste and contaminated items
Yellow and black striped ("tiger")	Offensive waste that is not infectious, for example incontinence pads from people without an infection
Blue	Medicines that are not cytotoxic or cytostatic, in their original packaging
Black or clear	Domestic (general) waste
Sharps bins: yellow lid	Sharps contaminated with medicines (other than cytotoxic)
Sharps bins: orange lid	Sharps not contaminated with medicines
Sharps bins: purple lid	Sharps contaminated with cytotoxic or cytostatic medicines

Check locally

Check with your waste contractor which streams they collect and how they want each one presented. Local arrangements can differ.

— Safe sharps handling

- ☐ Assemble sharps bins correctly and complete the label when you start using them
- ☐ Take the sharps bin to the point of use, so you never walk with a used sharp
- ☐ Never re-sheathe needles; dispose of the needle and syringe as one unit
- ☐ Never fill above the fill line. Close and lock the bin when it is three-quarters full
- ☐ Use the temporary closure between uses
- ☐ Store bins off the floor, out of reach of children and the public
- ☐ Lock full bins and keep them in a secure area until collection

— If someone has a sharps injury

- 1 Encourage it to bleed.** Gently encourage bleeding; do not suck the wound.
- 2 Wash it.** Wash with soap and running water. Do not scrub.
- 3 Cover it.** Dry and cover with a waterproof dressing.
- 4 Report it straight away.** Tell your manager and seek urgent advice from occupational health or the nearest emergency department, in line with your policy.
- 5 Record it.** Complete an incident report.

— Waste checklist

- ☐ Every room has the right bins for the waste produced there
- ☐ Bags are no more than three-quarters full and tied with a swan neck or tag
- ☐ Waste is stored securely until collection
- ☐ Waste transfer and consignment notes are kept as required
- ☐ Staff are trained in segregation

Stock up in one order

Order by 4pm for next-day delivery. One account, one invoice.

[Sharps bins and waste →](#)

[GP surgery supplies →](#)

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