



TOOLBOX EDUCATION SESSION

Waste Management in Home Care Settings

1. Why It's Different In-Home Care

The client's home is not a healthcare facility. Waste management must:

- Protect healthcare workers (HCWs) and clients
- Respect the home environment
- Promote sustainability
- Ensure compliance with IPC, local jurisdictional requirements - Environment Protection Agency (EPA) and WHS requirements

2. Waste Guidance

Guided by:

IPC Guidelines

- [The Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare](#)
- [Aged Care IPC Guide](#)

Standards

- [Aged Care Quality Standards](#)

WHS legislation

- [Work Health and safety Act 2011](#)

Environmental Protection Authority jurisdictional waste guidelines

- See resources

3. Types of Waste in Home Care

General Waste

- Includes:
 - Non-contaminated items and client generated waste
 - Items contaminated with small amounts of blood or body fluids (i.e. wound dressings, incontinence aids, colostomy/ileostomy aids)
- Disposed of into household bin and council collection bins
- Appropriate food scrapes may be composted

Clinical Waste

- Includes:
 - Items saturated with blood or infectious body fluids, human tissue and laboratory waste (e.g. wound dressings, full catheter bags/colostomy and ileostomy bags that cannot be safely emptied, heavily contaminated PPE, indwelling devices)



- Where generated by service - colour coded in accordance with jurisdiction requirements - waste bag labelled and with biohazard symbol placed into a clinical waste bag in a lidded, lined bin or wheelie bin – removed off site by service.
- Where generated by client – placed in two plastic bags (double bagged) and disposed of in council general waste bin.

Sharps

- Includes:
 - Insulin nibs, needles, ampoules/vials, lancets, syringes
- Dispose in approved rigid, labelled sharps container (Australian/New Zealand Standards compliant)
- Colour coded – yellow (clinical), purple (cytotoxic)
- Sharps containers must not exceed $\frac{3}{4}$ capacity or the marked line level
- Sharps container return to pharmacy or approved collection point for disposal
- Never into household rubbish

Pharmaceutical waste: (excluding cytotoxic)

- Includes:
 - Expired, ceased, improperly stored/spilt medicines or those that belonged to a deceased person
- Securely stored – container/bagged - labelled
- Return to pharmacy for disposal

Cytotoxic Waste

- Includes:
 - Items contaminated with cytotoxic medications/body fluids generated during service e.g. PPE, medication cup/spoon/applicator, indwelling devices or cytotoxic medication for disposal
- Includes treatment at home, or from post inpatient/day treatment
- Where generated by service - purple cytotoxic labelled with telophase symbol bag, sealed. Immediately removed and not stored in the home
- Where generated by client- double plastic bag, and in general council waste

Confidential Paper

- Includes:
 - Client, HCW and organisation confidential information
- Return client documentation to office for secure disposal or secure shred destruction at client home
- Confidential information generated at the office (client/HCW) is to be shredded or placed in a secure locked, jurisdiction colour coded bin – requires licenced waste contractor collection.
- General paper waste placed in state/territory/ jurisdiction determined colour bins

4. Segregation in the Home

- HCW brings appropriate waste management supplies to each visit
- Disposes of waste at point of care



- Spill kits to be located in the home as per risk assessment
Follow organisational policy regarding removal
- Sharps containers:
 - Container location is risk assessed (service maintains or remains in client home)
 - Must be closed and replaced when full

5. Handling & PPE

Risk-based approach:

- Standard precautions and appropriate risk assessed use of PPE

Always:

- Check the environment for any hazardous or sharp items
- Report sharps injuries immediately and follow organisational policies
- Perform hand hygiene before and after handling waste
- Secure bags before transport

6. Transport from the Home

Follow organisational policy:

- Small amounts of clinical /cytotoxic waste may be removed by HCW (as approved by state/territory environmental regulations)
- Transport in sealed clinical/cytotoxic waste bag
- Place in designated transport container (clinical and cytotoxic) in vehicle
- Vehicle storage area must be separate from personal items, clinical/care items – i.e. in the boot
- Spill kit to be available

Sharps and containers:

- Do not recap/reuse/bend/break or manipulate needles/pens
- Never transport loose sharps
- Containers must be sealed before transport
- Returned to office or approved collection site (pharmacy)

7. Storage

In the client's home:

- Household lidded bins and council wheelie bins
- Store sharp's container upright, closed and securely - keep away from children and pets

At the service:

- Store waste in designated, secure, ventilated and washable area
- Area must be:
 - Locked



- Signposted
- Pest-proof
- Bins and storage areas must have cleaning schedule requirements – drainage of cleaning water run-off must be considered – as per jurisdictional requirements. Consider contracted bin cleaning service to manage and retain used cleaning water.

8. Removal

- General waste and that generated by client removed by local council waste collections
- Clinical/cytotoxic waste collected by licensed contractor via provider
- Sharps may be disposed via:
 - Approved community pharmacy programs – arranged by service provider
 - Licensed waste contractor via service provider

9. Key Messages for Home Care HCW

- The home is a shared environment – safety and dignity matter
- Waste should never create risk for client, HCW or family members
- Always follow organisation IPC and WHS policies

10. Resources

- Australian Waste Policy – Department of Climate Change, Energy and Environment and Water
<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/protection/waste/how-we-manage-waste/national-waste-policy>
- Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association of Australia
<https://www.wmrr.asn.au/Web/Default.aspx>
- Environmental Protection Authority – Waste guidelines
 - NT: <https://ntepa.nt.gov.au/consultation/environmental-guidelines>
 - QLD: https://www.des.qld.gov.au/policies?a=272936:policy_registry/pr-gl-clinical-and-related-waste.pdf
 - NSW: <https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/waste/industrial-waste/clinical-and-related-waste>
 - Victoria:
 - <https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/for-business/find-a-topic/about-clinical-waste>
 - <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/planning-infrastructure/waste>
 - <https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/about-epa/publications/iwrg612-1>
 - SA: https://www.epa.sa.gov.au/environmental_info/waste_recycling/disposing-waste
 - WA: <https://www.epa.wa.gov.au/guidelines-and-procedures>
 - TAS: <https://epa.tas.gov.au/business-industry/regulation/waste-management/controlled-waste/handling-controlled-waste-in-tasmania/required-approvals-authorisations-for-controlled-waste-management/approved-management-methods/clinical-and-related-waste>



- ACT: https://www.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/2423722/Waste-Management-Policy-ACT-Health-Directorate.pdf
- NZ: NZS 4304:2002 Management of healthcare waste
<https://codehub.building.govt.nz/resources/nzs-43042002>

Resources Endorsement /Approval

Version	Date	Addition/Amendments	Author	Review By
1.0	June 2026	New Guideline	C. Spinks ACIPC IPC CNC, ACIPC Aged Care Working Group	Advancing IPC Practice and Standards Committee

Contact Information

ACIPC office: office@acipc.org.au

