



TOOLBOX EDUCATION SESSION

Waste Management in Residential Care Homes (RCH)

1. Why It's Different In-Home Care

RCH are a home and a healthcare facility. Correct waste handling:

- Protects residents, health care workers (HCWs) and visitors
- Reduces infection transmission risk
- Prevents sharps injuries
- Promotes sustainability
- Ensures 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

General Waste

- Includes:
 - Food scraps (appropriate food scraps may be composted)
 - Paper, cardboard, magazines/newspapers
 - Plastic or foil packaging
 - Minimally contaminated PPE
 - Jurisdiction/local council dependent:
 - Items contaminated with small amounts of blood.
 - Items contaminated with small to moderate amounts of body fluids (e.g. wound dressings, incontinence aids, colostomy/ileostomy aids)
 - Colour coded bag/bin in accordance with jurisdiction/local council requirements
 - Council collection waste removal



Clinical Waste

- Includes:
 - Items contaminated with saturated blood or infectious body fluids/tissue (wound dressings, catheter bags/colostomy and ileostomy bags that cannot be safely emptied, heavily contaminated PPE)
- Colour coded in accordance with jurisdiction requirements, labelled with biohazard symbol, clinical waste bag in lidded, lined bin or wheelie bin

Sharps

- Includes:
 - Needles, insulin nibs, lancets, broken ampoules/vials, disposable razors
- Dispose of in an Australian/New Zealand (AS/NZ) Standards compliant sharps container, labelled and colour coded.
- Sharps containers must not exceed $\frac{3}{4}$ capacity or the marked line level
- Colour coded – yellow (clinical), purple (cytotoxic)

Pharmaceutical waste: (excluding cytotoxic)

- Includes:
 - Expired medicines, ceased, improperly stored/spill, belonged to a deceased
- Securely stored in a pharmacy returns container until collection by pharmacy
- Disposal of scheduled medicine must be in accordance with relevant jurisdictional requirements

Cytotoxic Waste

- Includes:
 - Items contaminated with cytotoxic medications/body fluids (contaminated PPE, medication cup/spoon/applicator, incontinence aid) or cytotoxic medication for disposal
- Risk based cytotoxic PPE, including nitrile gloves
- Purple cytotoxic labelled, with telophase symbol bag in lidded, lined bin or wheelie bin

Confidential Waste

- Includes:
 - Documents with resident or HCW information
- Shredded or placed in a secure locked, jurisdiction colour coded bin – requires licenced waste contractor collection.

4. Segregation at the Point of Care

- Waste must be placed immediately into the correct bin
- Never mix differing waste types
- Do not overfill bags or sharps containers
- Close and secure bags before transport and removal
- Spill kits to be located in sluice rooms, laundry, waste storage and kitchen

Segregation reduces disposal costs and prevents injury.



5. Handling & PPE

Risk-based approach:

- Standard precautions- PPE
- Transmission-based precaution risk assessed

Always:

- Check the environment for any hazardous or sharp items
- Report sharp or splash injuries immediately to line manager/person in charge and follow organisational policies
- Perform hand hygiene before and after waste handling
- Avoid compressing or reaching into filled waste bags
- Secure bags before transport

6. Transport within the facility

- Schedule appropriate waste transport times in the facility (not during food/clean linen delivery)
- Use designated waste trolleys (easy to clean)
- Do not drag bags on the floor or hold against body
- Keep waste separated from clean supplies
- Clean trolley after use
- Sharps and containers:
 - Never transport loose sharps
 - Containers must be sealed before transport

Sharps and containers:

- Do not recap/reuse/bend/break or manipulate needles/pens
- Never transport loose sharps
- Containers must be sealed before transport

7. Storage

- Store waste in designated, secure, ventilated and washable area
- Area must be:
 - Locked
 - Signposted
 - Pest-proof
- Bins (waste contractor responsible) and storage areas (provider responsible) must have a cleaning schedule – drainage of cleaning water run-off must be considered – as per jurisdiction requirements



8. External Removal

- General waste removed by local council waste collections
- Clinical/cytotoxic/sharps removed by licensed waste contractor (Cytotoxic waste requires approved specialist disposal)
- Awareness to contract and contractor waste management requirements
- Contract must include surge requirements – outbreak collection and deliveries
- Ensure documentation/collection records are maintained

9. Key Messages

- Waste management is part of Standard Precautions
- Correct segregation and management protects residents, HCWs and visitors' safety and wellbeing
- Always Follow your organisation's IPC and WHS policies
- Good waste practice supports outbreak prevention

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>



ACIPC

Australasian College
for Infection Prevention and Control

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

