

**Disclaimers:** This information was believed to be correct at the date of its publication. This information is for general information purposes only and should not be relied upon for legal advice.

This Fact Sheet explains safe practices, minimum standards, and infection control procedures and incorporates “best practice” information for owners/operators of skin penetration premises. If skin penetration procedures involve the use of sharps, there must be an appropriate sharps container at the premises. The risk of transmission of infection can be minimised by ensuring that premises are maintained in a clean and hygienic manner, “Standard Precautions” are used, effective sterilisation of equipment is achieved and waste is disposed of correctly.

Unsafe or unhygienic procedures may affect the health of both the client and the operator. Where procedures involving skin penetration are not managed correctly, they may transmit bacterial, fungal and viral infections, including HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C. The aims are to minimise the risk of transmission of micro-organisms, promote safe work environments, and promote public awareness of safe working practices and procedures and to be user friendly.

## 1 DISPOSAL OF SHARPS

Care must be taken to prevent injuries during disposal of sharps. The potential for transmission of blood-borne diseases is greater when sharps are disposed of incorrectly. Sharps must be disposed of immediately after use into an Australian Standard Approved sharps container.

- Use of non-reusable sharps - AS 4031-1992 Non re-useable containers for the collection of sharp medical items used in health care areas; or
- Use of reusable sharps – AS/NZS - 4261-1994 Re-useable containers for the collection of sharp items used in human and animal medical applications.

Ensure that there is an accessible sharps container for the disposal of sharps as close as practical to the point of generation. Immediate disposal protects operators, staff and clients from injury. Sharps containers must not be accessible by visitors, particularly children. Sharps containers must not be overfilled. Seal and store for disposal. Do not forcefully insert items into sharps containers.

Sharps waste is classified as a “clinical and related waste” under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997. Transport and disposal requirements are contained in the Protection of the Environment Operations [Waste] Regulation 2005. For Sharps collection and disposal contact a licensed waste transporter and treatment facility, or contact the local authority. Disposal of sharps into the general waste stream is illegal. **Records of sharps waste removal must be kept on site for 5 years.**

## 2 DISPOSAL OF WASTE

All premises carrying out skin penetration procedures must have a waste disposal bin. Waste shall be placed in plastic lined receptacles at the site of generation. Waste should be double bagged and disposed of with the general garbage daily. Waste bags and containers must not be overfilled as this prevents closure and increases the risk of rupture. Waste bags must be tied or sealed and left in a secure place for collection.

**SHARP OBJECTS MUST NEVER BE PLACED INTO WASTE BAGS**

**Note:** This Code is based on the requirements of the Public Health Regulation 2012, the Protection of the Environment Operations [Waste] Regulation 2005, and the Skin Penetration Guidelines prepared by the NSW Health Department and should be read in conjunction with those documents.