

What is clinical waste?

If you work in a health or medical setting, a dental surgery, vet clinic, pharmacy or laboratory, or you work in tattooing, body piercing or sex work, you may have to deal with clinical and related waste.

Clinical waste is any waste from these settings that can cause disease or injury. To keep people and the environment safe, we need to handle and dispose of this waste correctly.

Each industry or sector may have regulations or guidelines to explain how to manage waste in your setting. You should refer to these.

Sorting waste

It is important to sort different types of waste and put them in the correct bin. Some types of waste are sent to landfill; some are shredded (cut up) and disinfected; and other types are incinerated (burned).

The table below describes what goes into the most common waste containers. The information in the right column will help you understand which bin to use. Sort waste into the correct.



	Pharmaceutical waste—old medications and drugs
	Sharps waste—sharp items such as syringes, blades, and devices with retractable sharps
	Clinical waste— Items or substances from a person who has, or may have, a transmissible illness and items with visible blood or body fluids
	Recycle waste — can be recycled and is not hazardous
	General waste— cannot be recycled and is not hazardous



Did you know?

- Clinical waste is a LOT more expensive to dispose of than general waste.
- Needles and other sharps should be disposed of immediately after use directly into a sharps waste container. NEVER put your hand into a sharps waste container to get anything out!
- Clinical and sharps waste should be filled only $\frac{3}{4}$ full to avoid contamination and or accidental injury.
- Sharps waste containers should be attached in place, out of reach of children.

Handling clinical waste

Before handling clinical waste, don your personal protective equipment (PPE) and have the yellow clinical waste bag or bin ready.

Handle clinical waste bags carefully. Never push the waste down into the bin or bag. Tie them off with a knot. Keep them upright and away from your body when you place into a hard-sided bin. Do not store full bags on the floor.

When you have finished disposing of the waste remove all PPE and perform hand hygiene.

Storing clinical waste

When storing clinical and related waste, ensure there is a dedicated storage area with hazard signs, out of the weather in a place not visible to the public. Your workplace should have a kit to use to clean up any clinical waste spills. If waste collection is late or the waste bins are too full, report it.



This is a summary of the *Waste* module in the Department of Health's Infection Prevention and Control eLearning series.

Access this and other modules in the series at

www.vicniss.org.au/resources/ipc-elearning-modules/

