

IPC7.2012 Safely dispose of healthcare waste, including sharps, to prevent the spread of infection

OVERVIEW

This standard concerns disposing of healthcare waste, including sharps, in such a way that you minimise the risks of acquiring and spreading infections. The standard applies to activities that take place in any health and social care environment, including community and domiciliary settings, and ambulance care settings. Healthcare waste is produced as a result of healthcare activities and includes potentially hazardous substances that may cause infection to any person coming into contact with them. Different types of hazardous waste are categorised under European legislation. You should adhere to the national regulations and policies, including descriptions of types of waste, that apply to your country. Users of this standard will need to ensure that practice reflects up to date information and policies. Version No 2

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

You will need to know and understand:

1. relevant standard infection prevention and control precautions, national legislation/guidance and local policies/procedures
2. health and safety regulations covering your area of work
3. regulations and guidelines concerning hazardous substances
4. the chain of infection
5. how to access facilities for hand hygiene
6. effective techniques for maintaining hand hygiene
7. the range of personal protective equipment for activities within your job role
8. how to safely and effectively clean, with or without disinfection, following leakages or spills
9. how to safely put on, remove and dispose of personal protective equipment
10. how to handle and dispose of sharps safely
11. how to segregate different types of waste appropriately and safely using the colour-coded bags and waste receptacles available and the correct use of each
12. how to distinguish between single-use, single-patient use, and reusable equipment and/or personal protective equipment and how to dispose, launder, clean, disinfect or store them, safely
13. your own role and responsibilities, and the responsibilities of others
14. how to complete the relevant documentation required in your area of activity
15. how to report adverse events, accidents and incidents

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

You must be able to do the following:

- 1.use appropriate personal protective equipment when you are handling used sharps and other healthcare waste in accordance with local policies/procedures
- 2.encourage patients/service users to dispose of their own waste when they are able to do so safely, and provide them with appropriate receptacles and information for this
- 3.segregate healthcare waste into appropriate streams and receptacles for safe disposal referring to local policies/procedures
- 4.dispose of healthcare waste as soon as possible, as close to the point of use into the appropriate waste receptacle, ensuring the correct use of any inbuilt safety features
- 5.perform effective hand hygiene after handling waste, and enable patients/service users who have disposed of their own waste also to perform effective hand hygiene
- 6.seal waste receptacles safely and arrange for them to be removed and replaced with fresh receptacles in line with health and safety regulations and local policy/procedures
- 7.ensure the point of origin of the waste is clearly marked on containers by an appropriate tag, tape or label, so that it is clear what they contain, following recognised codes
- 8.if any spillages of waste occur, clean, with or without disinfection as soon as possible in accordance with local/national policies/procedures
- 9.ensure that non-disposable waste containers are not overfilled, are kept clean and secure and in good repair and working order
- 10.should you encounter problems with the facilities and supplies for disposing of waste, that you are unable to remedy, inform the person responsible for them and ask them to take action
- 11.ensure waste is not left accessible to unauthorized persons or pests
- 12.report any adverse events, incidents or accidents concerning healthcare waste immediately, following local policies/procedures

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This National Occupational Standard was developed by Skills for Health. There are additional NOS on the Skills for Health website relating to Decontamination. This standard links with the following dimension within the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework (October 2004): Dimension: Core 3 Health, safety and security