



**Community Infection Prevention and Control
Policy for Domiciliary Care staff**

Safe disposal of waste

SAFE DISPOSAL OF WASTE

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This Policy has been adopted by:

Organisation:

Signed:

Job Title:

Date Adopted:

Review Date:

If your organisation would like to exclude or include any additional points to this Policy, please include below. Please note, the Community IPC Team cannot endorse or be held responsible for any addendums.

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1. Introduction

This Policy is one of the 'Standard infection control precautions' (SICPs) referred to as 'Safe disposal of waste (including sharps)' by NHS England and NHS Improvement.

Waste is potentially hazardous and, if not disposed of correctly, can result in injury or infection.

All staff are responsible for the safe management and disposal of waste. Where any doubt exists, advice should be sought from the local environment agency office or local authority.

Further information can be found in the *Environment and sustainability Health Technical Memorandum 07-01: Safe management of healthcare waste*.

Always use standard infection control precautions and transmission based precautions (SICPs and TBPs), refer to the 'SICPs and TBPs Policy for Domiciliary Care staff'.

When caring for service users in relation to COVID-19 or any other new emerging infections, staff should refer to national infection prevention and control guidance on the disposal of waste.

2. Waste streams

Examples of the waste streams that can occur in a service user's home:

- Recycling
- Household waste
- Offensive/hygiene waste
- Infectious waste
- Sharps
- Medicines

Recycling

Information on the items that can be recycled can be obtained from the service user's local authority.

Items that are recyclable which have been contaminated with food/drink/liquids, etc., e.g. bottles, cans, should be rinsed before being placed in the recycling bin.

Household waste

General domestic waste should be disposed of in the household waste stream. It should be put into a plastic bag and, if available, placed into the household waste wheelie bin.

Offensive/hygiene waste

Generally, most waste generated in domiciliary care falls under the category of offensive/hygiene waste.

This is waste such as incontinence pads and other waste produced from human hygiene, e.g. sanitary waste, stoma bags, etc., **which is non-infectious and which does not require specialist treatment or disposal**, but which may cause offence to those coming into contact with it.

Whether this type of waste can go into the normal household waste stream will depend upon the specific circumstances of each case. It will depend on issues such as:

- A risk assessment, as advised by your employer
- Whether a care professional is in attendance or not, as different legislation would come into effect

For example, if the service user is **self-caring and not requiring the assistance of care workers** then offensive/hygiene waste may be suitable for the domestic waste stream.

However, if carers assist in the activities of daily living then offensive/hygiene waste should not enter the domestic waste stream. In such cases, the waste should be placed into a yellow and black stripe offensive/hygiene waste bag and collected as arranged with the local authority.

Risk assessment approach to waste segregation based on likelihood of infection being present

Proposed general classification:

Offensive (where risk assessment had indicated that no infection is present, and no other risk of infection exist)

Contaminant

Urine, faeces, vomit and sputum

Examples

Urine bags, incontinence pads, single-use bowls, nappies, PPE

Exception to this rule

Gastrointestinal and other infections that are readily transmissible in the community setting (e.g. Norovirus, campylobacter, salmonella, chickenpox/shingles), hepatitis B and C, HIV - only if item contaminated with blood

Further advice on the classification and disposal of offensive/hygiene waste can be sought from the service user's local environment agency or local authority.

Infectious waste

Waste is classified as infectious waste where:

- The service user is known or suspected to have an infection
- Where an infection is not known or suspected, but a potential risk of infection exists

If a risk assessment identifies waste as infectious, it should be placed into an orange infectious waste bag and collected as arranged with the local authority.

Risk assessment approach to waste segregation based on likelihood of infection being present
<p>Proposed general classification Infectious unless assessment indicates no infection present. If no infection, and no other risk of infection, then offensive</p>
<p>Contaminant Blood, pus and wound exudates</p>
<p>Examples Dressings from wounds, wound drains</p>
<p>Exception to this rule Dressings contaminated with blood/wound exudates assessed not to be infectious</p>

Further advice on the classification and disposal of infectious waste can be sought from the service user's local environment agency or local authority.

Sharps

Whoever uses the sharp is responsible for its disposal, e.g. the service user if self-injecting, or the care worker if they used the sharp on the service user. Sharps should be disposed of immediately after use into an appropriate sharps container, e.g. yellow lidded sharps container for sharps contaminated with medicines, such as insulin needle/syringes, orange lidded sharps container for sharps not contaminated with medicines, such as lancets for checking blood sugar levels.

The sharps container should be disposed of as per local arrangement, e.g. returned to the GP surgery or pharmacy. They should not be disposed of in bin bags/wheelie bins.

Further information on the safe use and disposal of sharps can be found in the 'Safe management of sharps and inoculation injuries Policy for Domiciliary Care staff'.

Medicines

Unwanted or date expired medicines should not be placed in the household waste or disposed of down the toilet or sink. Local arrangements for the disposal of unwanted/date expired medicines should be followed, e.g. return to the local pharmacy for destruction.

3. Handling waste

- When handling waste, appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) should be worn, and hands cleaned after removing each item of PPE, e.g. pair of gloves, apron.
- Waste should be correctly segregated (see section 2).
- Avoid expelling air from a waste bag while leaning over it as harmful micro-organisms, such as bacteria and viruses, may be released into the air.
- All waste bags should be no more than 3/4 full and no more than 4 kg in weight. This allows enough space for the bag to be tied using a suitable plastic zip tie or secure knot.
- When handling tied waste bags, only hold the bag by the neck and keep at arms length to reduce the risk of contaminating your uniform/workwear or injury in case a sharp item has been inappropriately disposed of in the bag.
- If a waste bag awaiting collection is torn, the torn bag and contents should be placed inside a new waste bag.

Further information can be found in the *Environment and sustainability Health Technical Memorandum 07-01: Safe management of healthcare waste*.

4. Infection Prevention and Control resources, education and training

The Community Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Team have produced a wide range of innovative educational and IPC resources designed to assist Domiciliary Care in achieving compliance with *The Health and Social Care Act 2008: Code of Practice on the prevention and control of infections and related guidance* and CQC registration requirements.

These resources are either free to download from the website or available at a minimal cost covering administration and printing:

- IPC Policy documents for Domiciliary Care staff
- 'Preventing Infection Workbook: Guidance for Domiciliary Care staff'
- IPC audit tools, posters, leaflets and factsheets
- 'IPC Bulletin for Domiciliary Care staff'

In addition, we hold educational study events in North Yorkshire and York and can arrange bespoke training packages. Prices vary depending on your requirements and location.

Further information on these high quality evidence-based resources is available at www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk.

5. References

Department of Health (2015) *The Health and Social Care Act 2008: Code of Practice on the Prevention and control of infections and related guidance*

Department of Health (2013) *Environment and sustainability Health Technical Memorandum 07-01: Safe management of healthcare waste*

NHS England and NHS Improvement (March 2019) *Standard infection control precautions: national hand hygiene and personal protective equipment policy*