



**County of San Diego**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**  
P.O. BOX 129261, SAN DIEGO, CA 92112-9261  
Phone: (858) 505-6700 or (800) 253-9933 Fax: (858) 505-  
6786 <http://www.sdcdeh.org>



## **MEDICAL WASTE DISPOSAL FOR MEDICAL PRACTICES**

Medical waste is regulated under the California Health and Safety Code Sections 117600 – 118360, also known as the Medical Waste Management Act (MWMA), and the San Diego County Code. Typical wastes generated from medical offices that are regulated as medical waste include, but may not be limited to, *sharps* waste and *biohazardous* waste. Most medical offices also generate *medical solid* waste. Other regulated wastes, such as spent or expired chemicals, may be classified as hazardous waste, which is not considered *medical* waste.

***What types of wastes generated at a medical practice are regulated as medical waste?***

*Sharps* waste and *biohazardous* waste are the two types of waste from a medical practice that must be managed as medical waste.

***What is sharps waste?***

*Sharps* waste includes a device that has acute rigid corners, edges, or protuberances capable of cutting or piercing, including, but not limited to, hypodermic needles, hypodermic needles with syringes, blades, needles with attached tubing, acupuncture needles, root canal files, broken glass items used in health care such as Pasteur pipettes and blood vials contaminated with biohazardous waste, and any item capable of cutting or piercing from trauma scene waste.

***What waste from medical offices is biohazardous waste?***

*Biohazardous* waste includes waste which contains recognizable fluid blood, containers or equipment containing blood that is fluid and several other categories of waste, such as chemotherapeutic waste (trace amounts) and bacterial cultures, which are not normally generated in a general medical practice.

***How should a medical practice dispose of regulated medical waste?***

There are several options for disposal of *sharps* waste:

- Disposal through a registered medical waste hauler,
- Mail-in sharps disposal (sharps only),
- Use of an alternative treatment technology approved by the California Department of Health Services, such as encapsulation (this technology is approved for *sharps* waste only).
- Treatment onsite by a steam autoclave prior to disposal as medical solid waste,

There are fewer options for disposal of *biohazardous* waste:

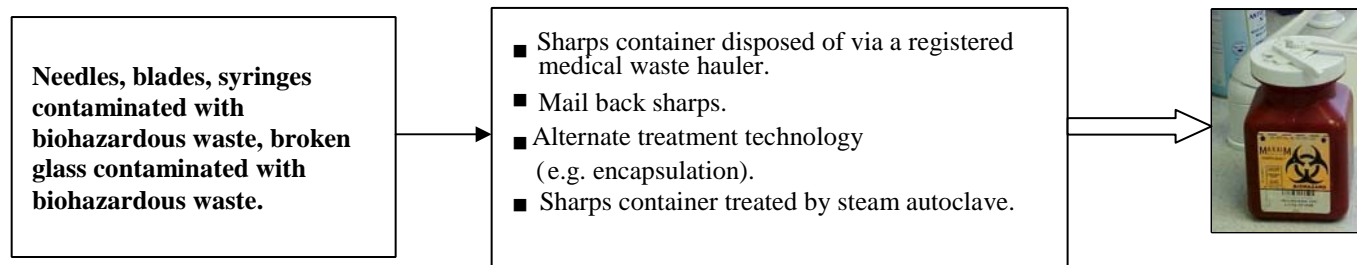
- Disposal through a registered medical waste hauler,
- Treatment onsite by a steam autoclave prior to disposal as medical solid waste,
- Use of an alternative treatment technology approved by the California Department of Health Services.

Approved alternative technologies are listed on the California Department of Public Health web page: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/medicalwaste/Pages/default.aspx>

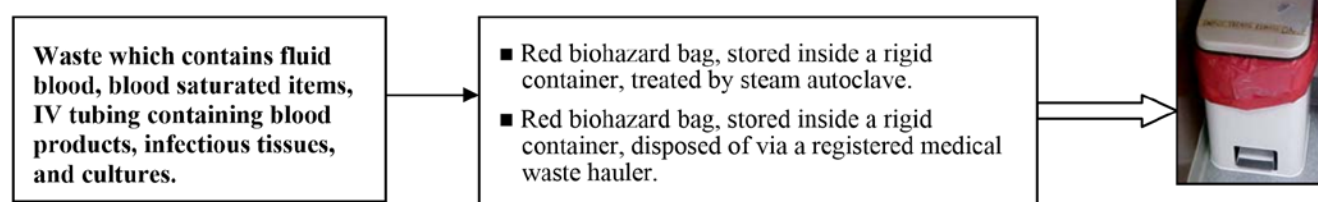
# MEDICAL WASTE DISPOSAL GUIDE

*This diagram is intended as a disposal guide for some types of regulated waste.  
It is not intended to serve as a comprehensive list of all regulated wastes.*

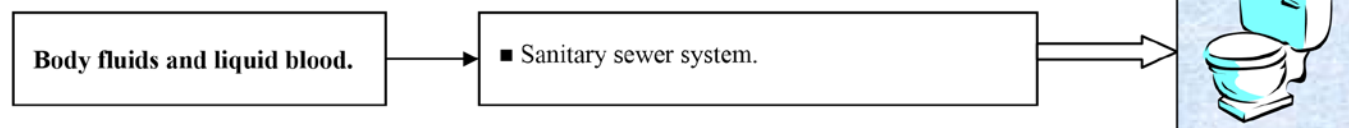
## Regulated Medical (Sharps) Waste



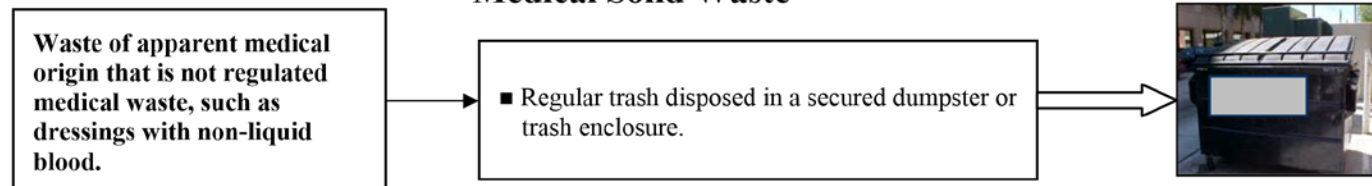
## Regulated Medical (Biohazardous) Waste



## Regulated Medical (Biohazardous) Liquid Waste



## Medical Solid Waste



## Hazardous Waste

