

SECTION 8A: CLINICAL PRACTICES	POLICY: 8A.0
POLICY: STORAGE & DISPOSAL OF MEDICATIONS, SUPPLIES & WASTE	PAGE: 1 OF: 2

PURPOSE:

- To ensure the safe storage, handling, and disposal of medications, medical supplies, and biomedical waste in the home care setting
- To define biomedical waste and establish procedures for its proper identification, segregation, and disposal
- To reduce the risk of injury, exposure, or infection to patients, caregivers, staff, family members, and the community
- To ensure patients and caregivers receive clear education regarding approved disposal methods and safety requirements
- To support environmentally responsible and legally compliant disposal practices while accommodating home-based care circumstances where permitted

POLICY:

- Helms Home Care will educate patients and caregivers on the proper storage, handling, and disposal of medications, medical supplies, and biomedical waste in accordance with this policy, pharmacy instructions, and all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.
- During the initial admission visit, and as needed thereafter, a licensed registered nurse will ensure that the patient and/or caregiver verbalizes and/or demonstrates understanding of proper storage and disposal procedures for medications, supplies, and biomedical waste, including items contaminated with blood or bodily fluids, sharps, and other regulated materials.
- Patients and caregivers will receive education on:
 - Proper identification of biomedical waste
 - Appropriate storage and disposal methods
 - Safety measures to prevent injury or exposure
- Helms Home Care staff will follow this policy and report any concerns related to improper disposal or potential regulatory non-compliance.

Policies & Procedures



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DEFINITIONS:

- **Biomedical Waste** (also referred to as Regulated Medical Waste): Waste generated during patient care that may be contaminated with blood or other potentially infectious materials, including but not limited to:
 - Sharps (needles, lancets, cannulas)
 - Used IV catheters
 - Blood-soaked or bodily fluid–contaminated materials
 - Certain personal protective equipment (gloves, gowns, masks) exposed to hazardous or infectious agents

STORAGE:

- Follow storage instructions listed on the medication label or provided by the dispensing pharmacy.
- Most infusion medications require refrigeration and should be removed prior to administration to warm to room temperature unless otherwise directed.
- Store medications:
 - In the body of the refrigerator (not the door)
 - Separate from food items
 - In the original packaging or delivery bag to maintain cleanliness
 - Away from light when indicated (use amber bags as provided)
 - Avoid freezing medications.
- Full-size refrigerators are preferred; if using a mini-refrigerator, store medications as far from the freezer compartment as possible.
- Flushes, supplies, and certain medications may be stored at room temperature in a:
 - Cool, dry area
 - Location away from bathrooms, humidity, children, and pets
- Supplies should remain organized to allow timely reordering.

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DISPOSAL:

- Unless otherwise identified as biomedical waste, the following may be disposed of in regular household trash, only if permitted by applicable state and local laws:
 - IV tubing
 - Syringes without needles
 - Empty IV bags or syringes
 - Unused, uncontaminated supplies

- Disposal of unused medications:
 - Patients should be instructed to first seek a drug take-back location, where available.
 - The DEA Take-Back Program Finder may be used to locate approved sites:
<https://apps2.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubdispsearch/>
 - If no take-back options are available and disposal is permitted by state and local regulations:
 - Remove medications from original packaging
 - Mix with an unpalatable substance (e.g., dirt, kitty litter, used coffee grounds)
 - Place in a sealed container or plastic bag
 - Dispose in household trash

- Biomedical waste must be segregated at the point of use from non-biomedical waste.

- Items identified as biomedical waste must not be disposed of as routine household waste unless explicitly allowed by state or local regulations.

- Certain therapies include the use of a Sharps / Medical & Hazardous Waste Container, which is provided by the dispensing pharmacy. The container must be used for disposal of:
 - Used needles
 - Used IV catheters
 - Used cannulas
 - Lancets

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- Any items that have come in contact with hazardous waste or potentially infectious materials, including:
 - Gloves
 - Gowns
 - Masks
 - Tubing or similar supplies

- Sharps containers should be filled only to three-quarters full.

- Once the container is full or no longer needed:
 - Close and secure the lid according to manufacturer instructions
 - Do **not** reopen or overfill the container

- Disposal of sharps containers will occur:
 - In accordance with state regulations and local health department requirements, and
 - In alignment with pharmacy, manufacturer, or contracted disposal guidance

- When permitted by state and local law, disposal may include placement in household trash only after proper sealing and securing of the container. If not permitted, alternative disposal methods (e.g., pharmacy return, approved medical waste program, or designated collection site) will be utilized.

- Patients and caregivers will be instructed to notify the pharmacy or Helms Home Care when a replacement sharps container is needed.