

Preventing Infection in Care

Infection Prevention and Control:
Care Homes for Older People and
Home Environment



Safe Management of Waste

Care homes for older people produce many different types of waste some of which requires special handling and disposal. This would include waste such as sharps, used continence products, wound dressings from individuals and waste generated from people who have or may have an infection, particularly during an outbreak of diarrhoea and vomiting.

The safe disposal of all waste by those involved in the handling, transporting and processing of it, is an essential part of health and safety and general good hygiene and is covered by legislation.

The way waste is handled will be determined by the arrangements between your care home and the waste contractor responsible for the uplift. A risk assessment will have been carried out by your managers to determine how the waste can be safely disposed of. The risk assessment will depend on a number of factors - such as the volume of waste and whether the waste is from infected or non infected individual. A colour coding system will be in place to help you make the correct choices when disposing of waste.

The safe and effective disposal of waste is your responsibility and you need to be aware of the colour coding in your area to ensure you make the right choices, whether it is household waste, or whether it requires special handling and disposal. Waste should always be disposed of immediately and as close to the point of origin as possible.

For the purposes of this video we will demonstrate using the standard infection control precautions. The coloured bags in your area may be different but the principles will still apply.

There are 3 main categories of waste and each has its own colour coding.

Domestic (municipal) waste. This waste is similar to your household waste such as tea bags, newspapers, paper towels, sweetie papers and tissues but depending on the risk assessment this type of waste may also include used continence pads, and wound dressings from people who are not suspected or known to have infection. This type of waste will be collected in a black bag.

Hygiene waste. This is waste that is produced from personal care which has been risk assessed as not infected but may be considered offensive. This would include sanitary products such as used continence pads, empty catheter bags and wound dressings.

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These items may be placed in a yellow bag with a black stripe often referred to as tiger bags or, depending on the local agreement between your care home and the waste contractor, a black bag may be appropriate.

Hazardous (special) waste often referred to as clinical or infectious waste. This waste consists of items that are contaminated or likely to be contaminated with infected blood and body fluids for example during an outbreak of infection. An orange bag or yellow bag is used for this type of waste.

Special arrangements are required for people receiving medication or treatment with chemotherapy or low level radioactive tests. Check with your local policy what colour bag or container is used for this type of waste.

For all hazardous (special) waste extra care needs to be taken - you should always wear apron and gloves and may need to wear face protection if there is a risk of splashes or spills.

Waste bags must be strong enough to avoid ripping or avoidable spillage and must be no more than $\frac{3}{4}$ full when tied and transported to the storage area awaiting collection.

Waste produced as a direct result of healthcare activities such as technical procedures or injections must be risk assessed. Sharps containers would be treated as hazardous (special) waste and have an appropriate uplift by a contractor.

These containers must be sealed and labelled and placed in a safe secure area until collected by the waste contractor. They must not be placed inside another waste bag.

No matter what waste you have been handling and regardless of whether you were wearing gloves, hands must be washed immediately afterwards.

To break the chain of infection:

Remember:

- Different types of waste must be treated differently
- Understand correct colour code system for waste disposal in your setting
- Wear PPE when dealing with soiled waste
- Never overfill bags
- Always wash your hands immediately after handling waste of any kind