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What you need to know about hypodermic needles and syringes and how to dispose of them.

California law allows pharmacies to sell hypodermic needles and syringes to adults age 18 and older without a prescription.¹ Adults anywhere in the state can also possess needles and syringes for personal use if they are provided by a pharmacy, doctor, or by an authorized syringe exchange program.²

Starting January 1, 2015, pharmacy law changed to remove limits on the number of syringes that adults can purchase and possess. There are now no limits on the number of syringes an adult can have or buy. The new law also removes limits on the number of syringes that can be sold. Pharmacists and physicians now can choose how many syringes to provide or sell.

Needles and syringes need to be disposed of safely after they have been used – they can't legally be thrown in the garbage. Ask your pharmacist whether they sell or provide "sharps containers." Sharps containers are made of strong, puncture-proof plastic.

You can't put a sharps container in the garbage or recycling. Sharps containers have to be taken to a location that knows how to handle them safely. Call 1-800-CLEANUP (253- 2687) and search for "syringes" to find a location near you.

¹ CA Business & Professions Code Section 4145.5

What to "Do" for Disposal:

- Use a container that is made for disposing of needles. Ask your pharmacy if they carry sharps containers.
- Immediately put used needles and syringes into your container with the point first.
- Keep the container closed between uses.
- Keep containers away from children and pets.
- Find out where to dispose of your full container(s) at 1-800-CLEANUP (253-2687).

The "Don'ts" of Disposal:

- Don't throw needles in the garbage, even if they are in a container. Containers can break in the garbage and needles can be a safety risk to sanitation workers.
- Don't flush needles down the toilet.
- Don't put sharps in aluminum cans, milk cartons, or any other containers that are not puncture-proof.

How do I find...?

For syringe disposal information call 1-800-CLEANUP or go to <http://search.earth911.com/>.

For drug and alcohol treatment information call 1-800-662-4357.

For HIV and hepatitis testing and treatment call 1-800-662-4357 or go to <http://www.cdcpin.org/ca/>.

For more information about access to sterile syringes go to <http://cdph.ca.gov/syringeaccess>.