

13. Biomedical Waste

Medical waste: refers to material generated as a result of the diagnosis or treatment of a patient, such as intravenous tubing or soiled dressings. These can be disposed of in regular waste.

Biomedical waste: Refers to a portion of the medical waste that requires special precautions due to the waste being:

- Infectious- anything grossly contaminated with blood or body fluids (i.e. dripping)
- Sharps- used needles, scalpels
- Cytotoxic- material used in chemotherapy
- Sensitive- due to the nature of the waste (i.e. human body parts).

Biomedical waste should be segregated from all other waste and handled with containment and storage requirements to prevent the exposure of possible infectants to patients and the health care workers.

Procedures for handling and disposal of biomedical waste will vary from community to community depending on availability of facilities. In all areas health care generated waste needs to be handled with caution and understanding of the risk of infection.

The handling and disposal of these items need special consideration due to their possible increased risk of both occupational and infectious exposure.

Waste handlers at all stages of disposal (including health care providers) should always be appropriately clothed and wear personal protective equipment so that harmful agents are prevented from contaminating skin or clothes, gaining access to open wounds, cuts or transmission through the skin.



