

How to Dispose of Medical Waste Exposed to COVID-19

Most medical waste associated with the diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19 *is not* considered infectious waste, also known as biohazardous or biomedical waste, and *should not* be incinerated or treated any differently than routine medical waste. This includes most gloves, masks, gowns, swabs and other medical equipment.



Incorrect over-treatment of COVID-19 medical waste by incineration may strain Oregon's waste incineration capacity. Correct disposal preserves incineration capacity for actual infectious waste.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, management of medical facility laundry, food service utensils and medical waste should be performed in accordance with routine procedures. There is no evidence to suggest that medical waste associated with COVID-19 needs any additional disinfection. Find more information from the CDC: <https://go.usa.gov/xvKcX>

More information

- DEQ info about managing COVID-19 solid waste: <https://ordeq.org/SW-COVID19>
- Oregon Health Authority info about infectious waste: <https://go.usa.gov/xvKc4>

Medical waste means solid waste that is generated as a result of patient diagnosis, treatment or immunization.

Noninfectious medical waste that does not require treatment and may be disposed of as trash includes:

- Personal protective equipment, including masks, gloves, gowns;
- Disposable wipes;
- Other waste that is not "saturated" with blood or other bodily fluids. Saturated means fluid will ooze or drip out with or without compaction.

Infectious waste that requires treatment by sterilization *or* incineration includes:

- Cultures and stocks, such as specimen cultures, serums and vaccines;
- Biological wastes, such as blood, bodily fluids and materials saturated with bodily fluids.

Infectious waste that must be treated by incineration includes:

- Pathological waste, such as biopsies, tissues and medical lab animals.

SHARPS such as needles, scalpel blades, lancets and syringes must be sealed in rigid, puncture and leak proof red containers, and then may be disposed in a segregated area of a permitted landfill.

Alternative formats

DEQ can provide documents in an alternate format or in a language other than English upon request. Call DEQ at 800-452-4011 or email deqinfo@deq.state.or.us.



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maintaining and enhancing
the quality of Oregon's air,
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