

# Coronavirus (COVID-19): Disposing clinical waste



Environment  
Protection  
Authority Victoria



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Fact sheet

More clinical waste is being generated in workforces across Victoria. This fact sheet explains how to manage clinical waste and arrange for collections in the following workplaces:

- aged care facilities
- disability services
- a workplace with confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) case/s
- community-based health services
- any other services related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) health response.

## What clinical waste is

Clinical waste includes waste from patients known or suspected of having a communicable disease, this includes coronavirus (COVID-19).

Items that have been soiled with blood or body fluids should also be treated as clinical waste. This includes:

- personal protective equipment (PPE)
- used bandaging
- dressing and wound care items.

Note that faeces, vomit and sputum are not bodily fluids.

PPE you wear while looking after a **patient suspected (or diagnosed) of having the virus** is clinical waste and you must dispose of it in the clinical waste bin.

Other clinical waste includes cytotoxic waste, pharmaceutical, drug or medicine and sharps waste. These items have their own dedicated bins and must not be mixed.

## What clinical waste is not

You should consider waste not to be clinical waste if it has:

- not come into contact with a suspected (or diagnosed) coronavirus (COVID-19) patient
- does not meet the description of clinical waste stated above.

Where there has been no contact with a suspected (or diagnosed) coronavirus (COVID-19) patient, the following types of items should not be considered clinical waste:

- food waste from food preparation or catering
- disposable items and plastics such as cups, plates and packaging
- single use PPE that has not come into contact with a suspected (or diagnosed) coronavirus (COVID-19) case
- items that are routinely washed such as bedding, clothing, crockery and cutlery.



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You can dispose of these kinds of wastes in your general waste or recycling bin.

For items that are washable, continue washing these with care and according to your existing procedures.

For information regarding disposing of PPE in settings that **do not have** a suspected, or diagnosed, case, please refer to [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Disposing PPE at home and in the workplace \(publication number 1898\)](#).

## How to dispose of clinical waste



The person or business generating clinical waste is responsible for the safe and correct disposal of their waste. This also includes safely storing and handling clinical waste before it is collected.

Clinical waste is a prescribed industrial waste under EPA Regulations and must be [transported by a permitted vehicle](#) and disposed of at a licensed premises.

## How to prepare clinical waste for collection

You must place your clinical waste into a dedicated yellow bag or a container or bin with a yellow lid and biohazard symbol.

When you prepare clinical waste for collection, follow these steps:

1. Place the clinical waste directly into a ridged clinical waste bin or in a double-layered yellow plastic bag (i.e. double-bagging), and clearly label it as clinical waste.
2. **Bins should be almost full, or at least 50 per cent full**, for collection. Do not compress the waste.
3. Ensure you tie-off the bags with knots facing upwards, and close bin lids.
4. Disinfect the lids, handles and top of the bins when you open, close and moved them.
5. After handling clinical waste wash your hands for at least 20 seconds, using soap and water or use a hand sanitiser that contains at least 60 per cent alcohol.

Schedule the collection of your bins when they are almost completely full. This will help reduce the number of collections with small amounts of waste. Please note that some contractors will not collect on the weekends.

## Onsite storage of clinical waste

You should put clinical waste in a dedicated storage area. The area should be signposted with the biohazard symbol. When storing clinical waste onsite, you should follow storage requirements such as:



- the site should be secure and not visible to the public, with access restricted to authorised persons only
- the site should not affect nearby residents from odour or other impacts
- the storage area should be weatherproof (i.e. roof above storage and side walls)
- storage and loading areas should have adequate containment measures (for example container bunding or sump)

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- spill kits must be available and contain all items necessary to clean up spills (such as disinfectant, bucket, gloves, disposable overalls, safety goggles/shield, plastic waste liners).
- maintaining a record of any spills, citing causes and corrective actions implemented.

Clinical waste containing blood, specimens, body parts or other organic material might decay if it is not treated or disposed of within 24 hours. You must refrigerate waste that may decay. Where clinical waste does not contain material that is likely to decay, you may store the waste at room temperature.

## How to arrange a collection of clinical waste

There are contractors in Victoria licensed to collect, transport and dispose of clinical waste.

A list of **licensed contractors** that collect and transport clinical waste is available on the [EPA Victoria website](#).

When starting a new collection service, contact several contractors to determine their availability for collections. Ask how much time they will need to collect your full bins and supply you with new empty bins. This will help you understand how many bins you may need to store your waste before they collect it.

## How to manage your ongoing collection of clinical waste

Many healthcare facilities will have existing contractual arrangements with licensed transporters of clinical waste.

Due to current circumstances, clinical waste collectors are experiencing an increased demand for collections. Contractors require a minimum of 48 hours' notice for any additional service requirements. This includes extra collections or additional bins.

If your clinical waste is collected on-request, contact your waste contractor to arrange scheduled collections. Ensure that more than one member of your staff is familiar with this collection process. Scheduled collections will help make sure your waste is collected on time.

## How to protect yourself and others

For further information on clinical waste, EPA guidance and education resources for staff please visit the DHHS clinical waste webpage <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/planning-infrastructure/sustainability/waste/clinical-related-waste>

Further information on what individuals can do to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) can be found at [www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-transmission-reduction-measures](http://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-transmission-reduction-measures)

For further information regarding storage, transport, treatment and disposal of coronavirus (COVID-19) related wastes, please contact EPA on 1300 372 842.

This document was developed in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services, Victoria [www.dhhs.vic.gov.au](http://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au)



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