Managing the Regulatory Environment
ADA’s Guidelines for Practice Success™ (GPS™)

ADA Tip Sheet on Medical Waste Disposal

Make sure that:

☐ Medical waste is properly separated and contained.
  ✽ While the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provides some general information regarding medical waste, the requirements for separating medical waste vary by state so be sure to check local regulations.

☐ Used sharps, such as needles, burs and scalpels are stored separately from other medical waste.
  ✽ See the articles on Sharps Safety, Disposal, and Safe Injection Practices and the ADA Do's and Don'ts for the Safe Handling of Instruments and Sharps in this module for information on handling and disposing of used sharps.

☐ Extracted teeth that are being discarded are subject to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Bloodborne Pathogens Standard since the agency considers them potentially infectious material.
  ✽ Extracted teeth that contain should not be placed in medical waste containers that will be incinerated.
    ▪ It’s a good idea to review state and local regulations regarding disposal of amalgam to ensure you’re in compliance with any regulations.
    ▪ You may want to check with metal recycling companies since some may accept extracted teeth with amalgam. Make you ask about any recyclers’ policies and handling instructions.
  ✽ Extracted teeth may be returned to patients who ask for them and at that point, they are not to present a health risk and do not fall under OSHA’s Bloodborne Pathogens Standard.
  ✽ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Q&A on Extracted Teeth also provides helpful information.

☐ Contact your contracted waste handling service for instructions on storing and handling medical waste.
  ✽ Find out if they can provide approved containers for storing and transporting medical waste.
  ✽ Confirm what documentation they’ll provide to confirm that medical waste has been removed from the practice and disposed of in accordance with local regulations.
    ▪ Your business agreement with the waste management company should include a clause requiring the handler to notify you of the waste’s final destination.
    ▪ Keep all documents from your waste disposal company concerning pick up and disposal in case you need to access that information in the future.

☐ No one on staff ever transports medical waste.

Resources:
EPA Medical Waste
ADA GPS Managing Regulatory: Sharps Safety, Disposal, and Safe Injection Practices
ADA Do's and Don'ts for the Safe Handling of Instruments and Sharps [PDF]
CDC Q&A on Extracted Teeth

Reproduction of this material by dentists and their staff is permitted, provided that any reproduction must include the ADA copyright notice. Any other use, duplication or distribution by any other party requires the prior written approval of the American Dental Association. This material is for general reference purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Dentists should contact qualified legal counsel for legal advice, including advice pertaining to compliance with the regulation(s) discussed in the content of this resource.

© 2017 American Dental Association. All Rights Reserved.