

## FAQ on home healthcare waste

Biohazardous waste generated at home by healthcare professionals treating patients or patients administering self-care needs to be managed responsibly and with the same care as biohazardous waste generated at healthcare facilities.

Here are some frequently asked questions on managing home healthcare waste based on the **Industry Code of Practice for Managing Biohazardous Waste (Including Clinical and Related Wastes)**, also known as the Biohazardous Waste Industry Code (BWI Code).

These FAQs give general guidance only. Biohazardous waste management is highly regulated with many measures required under law. Refer to the BWI Code and relevant regulations in your jurisdiction to understand both mandatory and recommended obligations.

### Q1. What is home healthcare waste?

Home healthcare waste includes waste that would be defined as biohazardous waste if generated in a healthcare facility, including sharps, sharps containers, dialysis waste and cytotoxic waste.

It includes waste generated by visiting healthcare professionals, such as community nurses and doctors, and waste generated by patients administering self-care.

### Q2. Is home healthcare waste classed as biohazardous?

While numerous standards cover the management of healthcare waste (see Appendix 1), home healthcare waste is only classified as biohazardous waste in some jurisdictions. As such, these wastes may not be subject to any legislative controls. Individual service providers are often responsible for managing these wastes, giving limited consistency both in and across states and territories.

BWI recommends that all healthcare providers manage this waste with the same care as similar wastes generated in healthcare facilities to prevent environmental and health and safety impacts to family members, the community, waste handlers and emergency response personnel.

### Q3. What are the risks of not managing this waste properly?

This waste poses a health risk when not properly segregated and disposed of, particularly to personnel collecting or sorting domestic waste (such as transfer stations, recycling facilities and composting operations) who will be unaware of the presence of biohazardous waste and will not take the appropriate safety measures.

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#### Q4. How do professional homecare providers manage home healthcare waste?

If providing home healthcare on a professional basis, any biohazardous waste generated through direct care of a patient in their home shall be managed in accordance with this Code, relevant legislation and the requirements of the facility responsible for that care.

All waste collected for storage, transport and treatment should be managed in accordance with the BWI Code.

Any organisation employing home healthcare providers is responsible for developing a waste management plan for the waste generated as a result of the services provided. This plan must set the location and operational requirements for storage/disposal facilities and identify responsible staff.

All staff must receive a copy of the waste management plan and be educated in good waste management techniques and practices.

#### Q5. How do I transport home healthcare waste?

Home healthcare providers must use the right containers, secure containers for transport, have a spill kit available and keep records of all wastes transported and disposed of.

Refer to Section 5 of the BWI Code for more information.

#### Q6. How should patients administering self-care at home manage biohazardous waste?

When setting up patients to administer self-care in their home, healthcare providers are responsible for telling patients how to dispose of biohazardous waste responsibly.

Healthcare providers should advise patients on the most appropriate options to dispose of biohazardous waste materials and encourage them to manage biohazardous waste in a safe manner. Healthcare providers need to support patients to do the right thing to avoid biohazardous waste ending up in the domestic waste or sewage system.

## About the BWI Code

The BWI Code helps anyone working with biohazardous waste to understand their responsibilities and work towards environmental best practice in the safe and cost-effective handling, transport, treatment and disposal of biohazardous waste across Australia and New Zealand.

The BWI Code is published by the Biohazard Waste Industry (BWI) division under the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association of Australia (WMRR) – the only national peak body for the \$15 bn waste and resource recovery industry.

To purchase the Code, email the WMRR national office at [info@wmrr.asn.au](mailto:info@wmrr.asn.au)

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