

Handling and disposing of infectious waste

Appropriate handling and disposal of potentially infectious waste contributes to preventing the spread of infection, illness and disease. For detailed information on handling and disposal of used needles and syringes, refer to the fact sheet on [Safe Handling and Disposal of Needles and Syringes](#).

Schools can refer to the Asset Maintenance Unit for disposal of nappies, incontinence pads and sanitary disposal units. TAFE facilities managers will be able to assist TAFE locations with similar issues.

When cleaning and disposing of potentially infectious waste such as blood or body fluids, or items containing these products, such as bloodstained or soiled clothing, the following steps should be taken:

Wear disposable powder-free latex or vinyl gloves, and a plastic apron if necessary
For blood and body fluid spills, absorb the bulk of the spill with disposable materials such as paper towels. Special care should be taken if waste contains sharp material such as broken glass. Use sturdy tongs, and wrap sharps securely in several layers of newspaper or put into a puncture-resistant rigid-walled container such as a sharps container.
Clean the spill with warm water and detergent.
After cleaning, disinfect the area with a freshly prepared solution of 1:50 diluted 5% household bleach* ** and leave to dry. For small spills (e.g. spots of blood on vinyl floor) an alcohol wipe may be sufficient.
Cleaning equipment such as mops and buckets should be cleaned with warm water and detergent and stored dry.
Remove and dispose of gloves and other waste such as paper towels into a sealable plastic bag. Refer to the pictorial removal of gloves technique . Dispose of the sealed plastic bag in general waste. Wash hands thoroughly with soap, water and dry with paper towels. Refer to the pictorial hand washing technique
If the spill is on carpet, clean with a neutral detergent and arrange for the carpet to be cleaned with an industrial cleaner as soon as possible
Granular formulations that produce high available chlorine concentrations can be used to contain the spill and prevent airborne contaminants
If staff or students find potentially infectious waste items, such as used needles and syringes in school/TAFE grounds, they should immediately advise relevant staff. Where possible, a responsible person should remain with the item while another retrieves appropriate handling and disposal equipment. No attempt should be made to recap, break or bend the needle as this is a common cause of injury. The department has developed a fact sheet relating to appropriate handling and disposal of used syringes .
If a needle-stick or other injury involving exposure to blood or body fluids occurs, the person should be medically assessed as soon as possible.

Household bleach is generally only needed for managing gastroenteritis outbreaks (vomit and diarrhoea spills) and for some blood spills i.e. it is recommended that bleach be used to clean blood spills on hard to clean surfaces e.g. between tiles or where there will be bare skin contact.*

** The department advises that cleaners are not to use bleach in regular cleaning unless directed by their supervisor. The department trains cleaners in the use of approved cleaning chemicals.*

*** If used, the safety data sheet (SDS) for the bleach product should always be available, read and instructions for use followed to prevent misuse or injury*