



SPPP.01.55.A1 Information Sheet: Handling and Disposal of Tissue and Hardware

Health and Safety Matters

Hospital waste usually contains similar levels of bacteria and other micro-organisms to general household waste. Careful management of hospital waste including human tissue and medical devices explanted (removed) from the human body is necessary to reduce the risk of disease to the public.

Infections from hospital waste can be caused by exposure to disease-causing micro-organisms in a number of ways. These include direct contact, through air or from a water source. Explanted devices can pose an additional risk by causing injury such as cuts, abrasions and punctures. Wound infection is of particular concern. Devices that pose a serious 'sharps' or infectious risk, or contain pharmaceutical, chemical or radioactive material cannot be released.

It is important to note that the UW Health will not test any human tissue or device for micro-organisms, or completely decontaminate hardware prior to release.

Handling and Disposing

The tissue or device will be given to you in a labelled container. The container may also contain minimal amounts of residual formalin and/or laboratory grade alcohol used as a preservative. These chemicals come with the following caution:

FORMALDEHYDE: Toxic by inhalation and if swallowed. Irritating the eyes, respiratory system, and skin. May cause sensitization by inhalation or skin contact. Risk of serious damage to the eyes. May cause cancer. Repeated or prolonged exposure increases the risk.

70% ALCOHOL: Extremely flammable liquid and vapor. Harmful by inhalation and if swallowed. Inhalation of high vapor concentrations may cause symptoms like headache, dizziness, tiredness, nausea and vomiting. May cause cancer. Causes damage to organs. Repeated or prolonged exposure increases the risk.

These fluids can be safely discharged into a sanitary sewer system. Neither fluid is classified as a federal hazardous waste, and the quantities are generally small. However, you should check with the local wastewater authority to make sure that this is acceptable practice. If it is, simply pour the fluids into a sink and flush them with copious amounts of running water.

Handling: The container should be handled while wearing protective gloves. It is our recommendation that the human tissue or device not be removed from the container it was received in.

Disposal: UW Health wants to ensure disposal of human tissue or hardware is performed in a safe way which will not place you or others at risk. You should check with the local authorities for guidelines on proper disposal. If the circumstances for safe disposal of the tissue or hardware change, you may return the tissue or hardware to the healthcare facility for disposal. Tissue presented for disposal should be bagged and in a labeled container.