

# COVID-19 Vaccine Waste Disposal Guidelines

- ✓ The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulates the handling of sharps, and states regulate their final disposal.
- ✓ OSHA requires that when an immunization is being administered, a sharps container must be located as close as possible to the point of use.
- ✓ All COVID-19 vaccines (Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson/Johnson) are preservative free and classified as **non-hazardous medication** if not empty or completely administered.
- ✓ However, empty pre-filled syringes, even safety syringes, are considered **sharps waste**.

## How to dispose of COVID-19 vaccine waste if:

### FULLY ADMINISTERED

**Vials with NO remaining vaccine:**  
dispose of in sharps or trash\*

**Syringes (needle attached) with NO remaining vaccine:** dispose of in sharps\*



### NOT FULLY ADMINISTERED

**Vials with remaining vaccine:**  
dispose of as non-hazardous medication

**Syringes with remaining vaccine:**  
dispose of as non-hazardous medication



*\*check state's regulation for definition of a sharp*

**NOTE: Never detach needles from the syringe.** While having unused vials of vaccine is not the optimal situation, but disposal of them is necessary, follow the guidance of the manufacturer, the FDA and your state regulation, including your organization's established policies. Alternatively, reach out to your medical waste disposal provider regarding the best option.

## Vaccine and Equipment Disposal

**Note:** Sometimes unused vaccine and diluent doses, unopened vials, expired vials, and potentially compromised vaccine may be returned for credit, even if they must be discarded. Contact the state or local immunization program or the vaccine manufacturer for vaccine-specific information.

**Open and broken vials and syringes, manufacturer-filled syringes that have been activated, and vaccines pre-drawn by providers cannot be returned and should be discarded according to state requirements.**

USN211005

