

Minnesota Department of Health

# Disposing of Unused or Expired H1N1 Vaccine in Minnesota

During the 2009-10 flu season, unused or expired H1N1 vaccine products may not be returned to the distributor. Instead, providers are responsible for disposing of them. To dispose of these materials appropriately, you need to know if they are either hazardous waste or infectious waste or both or neither. Those that are neither are considered industrial solid waste (normal trash). Proper disposal of vaccines is everyone's responsibility to protect our environment.

## Hazardous waste

Unused or expired H1N1 vaccines are considered hazardous if they contain mercury (such as thimerosal) or cresol-based preservatives. These are most commonly found in multi-dose vials and some pre-filled syringes. **Any vial that is not empty\* and contains vaccine with a mercury or cresol-based preservative must be managed as hazardous waste under Minnesota Hazardous Waste Rules.** This includes all multi-dose vials of H1N1 vaccine and the Novartis H1N1 pre-filled syringes that contain a trace of mercury.

If you already work with a hazardous waste disposal company, you might want to use them to dispose of unused or expired H1N1 vaccine. However, it is generally cheaper to go through a Very Small Quantity Generators (VSQG) site. To read a fact sheet about using VSQGs for disposal of hazardous waste, go to [www.pca.state.mn.us/publications/w-hw2-51.pdf](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/publications/w-hw2-51.pdf). If you have never generated or shipped hazardous waste before, you will need to complete some paperwork, probably two forms, but the VSQG site or hazardous waste disposal company will help with that.

You can assume that preservative-free vaccines (most commonly single-use vials) and single-dose pre-filled syringes (excluding Novartis syringes) are non-hazardous.

## Infectious waste

You can assume that an empty vial that contained H1N1 vaccine is non-infectious. However, that vial is considered infectious waste if combined with a used sharp, such as an injection syringe, broken contaminated glass, or lancet.

## Where to Dispose of H1N1 Vaccine, Vials, and Syringes

H1N1 Waste Items	Type of Waste	Where to Dispose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empty vials</li> <li>• Empty syringes without needles</li> </ul>	Non-infectious & non-hazardous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normal trash</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empty syringes with needles</li> </ul>	Infectious only (non-hazardous)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharps container</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-dose vials containing H1N1 vaccine</li> <li>• Pre-filled syringes containing Fluviron vaccine by Novartis</li> </ul>	Non-infectious and hazardous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hazardous waste container and management.</li> <li>• May be disposed of through a VSQG site, usually for a fee. Not all sites accept this waste, so call first.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used syringe with intact needle that still contains vaccine (unlikely to occur unless syringe malfunctions during use)</li> </ul>	Infectious and hazardous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hazardous waste container that meets sharps-container requirements</li> <li>• Management compliant with both hazardous and infectious waste requirements</li> <li>• May be disposed of through a hazardous waste disposal company</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preservative-free vaccines (most commonly single-use vials and some pre-filled syringes)</li> </ul>	Non-hazardous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normal trash</li> </ul>

\*A vial is considered empty when there is 3% or less of the original vaccine remaining and all vaccine that can be removed by normal means (syringe) has been removed. Single- or multi-dose vials that have been fully administered may still contain extra vaccine. Just because there is not enough vaccine left for a dose does not mean the vial is empty for waste disposal purposes. **If there is enough leftover vaccine in a vial that more liquid can be removed with a syringe, it must be managed as hazardous waste.** (Minn. R. 7045.0127, subp. 2.)



Immunization Program  
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For information on hazardous waste disposal in your area call your county public health office.