



# Risks of Improperly Disposing Medical Waste

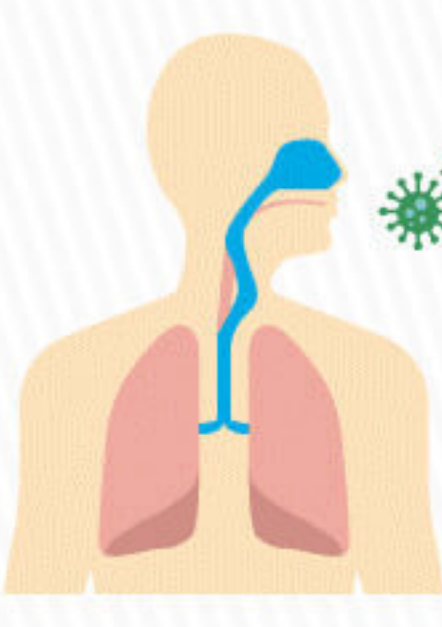
Studies from the World Health Organization (WHO) report on specific infections caused by the improper disposal of medical waste into the environment.

## Parasitic Infections

Labs generally incubate body fluids to test for the presence of parasites, and then dispose of the used culture dishes as medical waste. Some of the parasites can still thrive in the waste and cause infection.



## Infection of Airways & Lungs



Improperly stored and disposed medical waste can release airborne aerosols that may contain pathogens that can cause lung infections like influenza, tuberculosis and pneumonia.

## Skin Infection

There is also the possibility of contracting skin infections from medical waste — like anthrax.



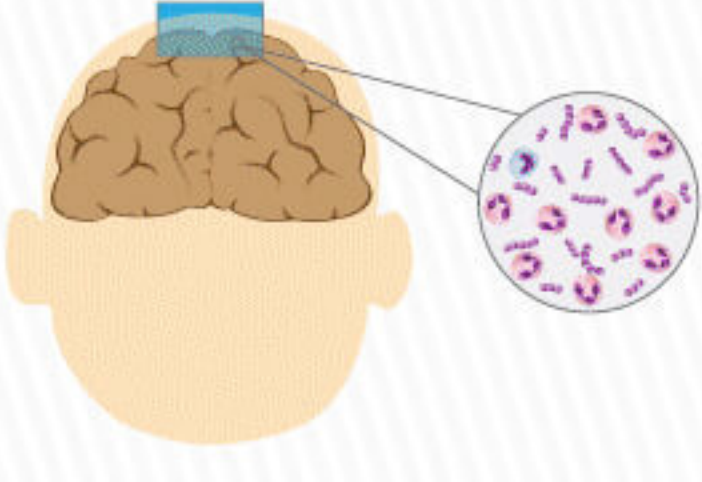
## Candida Infection



Candida infection is caused by the yeast *Candida albicans*. *Candida albicans* remains a significant disease associated with prolonged hospital confinement and can be life threatening to the elderly, pregnant mothers, small children, and people with weakened immune systems.

## Meningitis

Meningitis is a serious medical condition caused by inflammation of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord. Medical waste may contain pathogens that can transmit meningitis.



## Diseases From Improperly Disposed Waste With Trace of Vaccines



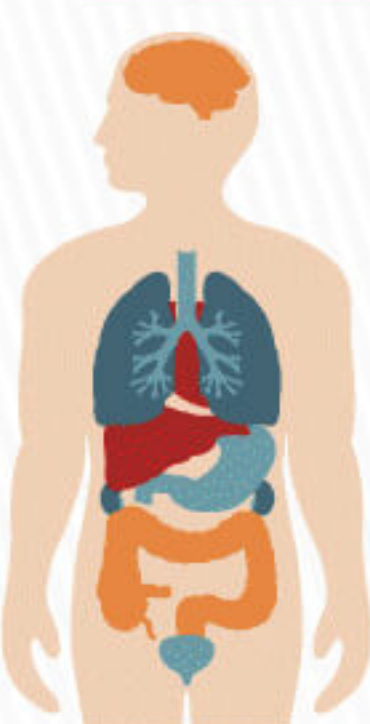
Several vaccines are made from attenuated pathogens, which are pathogens whose virulence is reduced, but is still live, so they possess the potential to cause disease. Some examples include measles, mumps, and certain types of influenza, chicken pox and polio vaccines.

## Bacteremia

Bacteremia is a life-threatening infection. Bacteremia infection occurs when bacteria are present in the bloodstream, where it can easily infect other organs and cause inflammation.



## Infections of Reproductive Organs



Medical waste can be contaminated with genital secretions that may harbour pathogens that can cause sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Some easily transmissible STIs include herpes, human papilloma virus, and syphilis.

## HIV, Hepatitis B & C Viruses

Puncture injuries from contaminated sharps can result in HIV and hepatitis B and C infections, which is a major reason why sharps are disposed of in rigid, sealed and clearly marked containers.



## Hemorrhagic Fevers



Ebola, Lassa and Marburg disease are transmitted by viruses that cause violent fevers and internal hemorrhaging. Because people infected with these very serious viruses are treated in hospitals, the viruses can be present in medical waste.

## C. Difficile Infection

New study shows higher rates of *C. difficile* infection in hospitals that use reusable sharps containers.



### References:

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6. <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/new-study-shows-higher-rates-of-c-difficile-infection-in-hospitals-that-use-reusable-sharps-containers-2015-06-27>

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