

# Using Reusable Containers for Hospital Waste

## Is there an Infection Risk?

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**“This paper assessed the international literature on Reusable Waste Containers infection risk and found negligible to nil risk of pathogen or disease transfer. The literature confirms that disinfection and microbiological monitoring and validation of RWC is not indicated, and that washing with hot water and detergent, using visual criteria for cleanliness and due diligence on contractor selection, enable reusable containers to be safely used” - Terry Grimmond**

### What was the study?

Reusable Waste Containers (RWC) are used to transport sharp and non-sharp healthcare risk waste in many countries. Initially with their introduction there may be a perception of risk of pathogen or disease transmission.

This study examined the international literature and guidelines to determine the microbiological risk of using RWC and what, if any, process validation or monitoring may be indicated.

### What were the results?

- RWC pose a negligible to nil risk of pathogen transmission to patients and environments.
- There are no published reports of disease transmission from RWC.
- The probability of RWC being associated with infection is an extremely low 1 in 400 million.
- RWC are assessed as having risk level 6, representing the lowest level of risk for infection transfer.
- At risk level 6, RWC require cleaning for safe reuse, with no need for disinfection.

### What does this mean for you?

- Thorough cleaning using visual criteria, and due diligence in selecting RWC contractors, will ensure risk-free use of RWC.
- It is unnecessary to microbiologically monitor RWC.
- Hospitals adopting RWC are in compliance with national sustainability legislature.
- There are significant benefits to using RWC including reduction of Health Care Worker sharps injury risk, reduction of waste landfilled, and reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

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