Trace chemotherapy wastes are materials that have come into contact with or may contain only a residual amount of a chemotherapy agent. This includes empty drug bottles or IV bags, as well as gloves and other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) used during administering chemotherapy drugs. To be considered a trace chemotherapy waste, the item or container must be “RCRA empty”. Generally, to be considered Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) empty no more than 3% by weight of the total capacity of the container can remain (40 CFR 261.7). For more information, please see our Evaluating Pharmaceutical Waste factsheet at: http://dca.ky.gov/DCA%20Resource%20Document%20Library/PharmWasteBusinessEval.pdf.

Bulk chemotherapy wastes are materials that have been saturated with chemotherapy agents or are over 3% hazardous material by weight. This might include materials used to clean spills, IV bags that are not empty or PPE that is soaked in these drugs.
Recommended Disposal Options

Potential chemotherapy wastes should first be reviewed to determine if it can be classified as unused, expired or discontinued drugs. These can often be donated to facilities participating in cancer drug takeback or reuse programs. Some manufacturers may accept unused and/or unopened chemotherapy drugs or they may be brought to a reverse distributor. Check with your provider to see what options are available. Chemotherapy drugs that can no longer be used, returned or donated are considered waste.

Nonhazardous & trace chemotherapy wastes

♦ All "soft" chemotherapy wastes (contaminated gloves, gowns, etc.) should be placed in rigid plastic containers labeled as “trace chemotherapy waste”.
  ♦ It has become an industry standard to use bright yellow containers for this type of waste.
  ♦ For sharps contaminated with chemotherapy drugs, it is recommended to use a sharps container dedicated to chemotherapy drugs only, and handle it as infectious medical waste.
  ♦ Once properly contained, these wastes can be sent to a medical waste disposal company, or an incinerator approved to take the waste.

Note: Due to liability concerns relating to biohazardous or infectious characteristics, it is recommended to handle all potential trace chemotherapy wastes in this manner.

Bulk chemotherapy wastes

♦ Bulk chemotherapy wastes containing characteristic or listed hazardous waste must be managed as hazardous waste.
  ♦ This generally means disposing in a black hazardous waste container for pickup by a hazardous waste disposal company.
  ♦ It is recommended to handle nonhazardous bulk chemotherapy waste as trace chemotherapy waste, to increase safety and decrease liability concerns.

Note: Be sure to separate the different wastes. If different wastes are mixed together, the whole batch must be treated as the waste that has the most stringent requirements.