

Safe disposal of needles and syringes for people who inject drugs

Generally, people who inject drugs dispose of their used injecting equipment safely and appropriately.

In Western Australia, people who inject drugs can safely dispose of used needles and syringes by:

- > returning to a needle and syringe exchange program (NSEP), currently operated in:
 - > the metropolitan area and the South-West by [Peer Based Harm Reduction WA \(external site\)](#)
 - > the metropolitan area by WAAC (previously known as the WA AIDS Council)
 - > Mandurah by the South Metro Community Drug Service – Palmerston Mandurah
 - > Albany by the Great Southern Population Health Unit NSEP
 - > Geraldton by the Midwest Community Drug Service
 - > Kalgoorlie by the Goldfields Population Health NSEP
 - > Katanning by the Great Southern Population Health Unit NSEP
 - > South Hedland by the Pilbara Population Health Unit NSEP
 - > Broome by the Kimberley Mental Health and Drug Service NSEP
 - > [Find out more about where to access these services.](#)
- > placing in a special needle and syringe disposal unit provided by some local governments or businesses.

What to do if you find a needle or syringe in the community?

Used needles and syringes are occasionally found in parks and other public places, and this can be a concern for people in the community who find them.

If you find a discarded needle and syringe in the community, and none of the options above are possible, used needles and syringes may be disposed of in the domestic waste in a rigid-walled, puncture resistant plastic container with a screw-top lid.

The risk of catching HIV or other infections from an injury caused by a discarded needle is very low. However, it is important to follow certain steps when disposing of a needle and syringe:

1. Do not be alarmed.
2. Get a rigid-walled, puncture resistant, plastic container with a well-secured lid, preferably screw top. Avoid using glass which can shatter, aluminium that can be squashed or frosted plastic that may not be puncture-proof.
3. Bring the container to the needle and syringe, and place on the ground next to the needle and syringe. Do not hold the container as you are putting the syringe in it.
4. Pick up the used needle and syringe by the blunt end, away from the point. Do not touch the sharp point.
5. Do not try to put the plastic protective cap back on a needle if it has been removed.
6. Put the needle and syringe, point first into the container. More than one needle and syringe can be placed in the container, but do not overfill. Do not carry the needle and syringe unless it is in a suitable container.
7. Make sure the container is tightly sealed.
8. Put the sealed container in a domestic rubbish bin. Do not put needles and syringes down toilets, in recycling bins or post boxes.
9. If you accidentally prick yourself with the needle, find out how to [treat discarded needle and syringe injuries](#).

Tell children never to pick up a needle, but to let an adult know if they find one.

If you are representing a company or service that requires disposal of large quantities of needles and syringes, arranging for a waste disposal company to assist with collection and disposal would be recommended. See 'waste disposal' in the [Yellow Pages \(external site\)](#).

Dispose safely!

Do not dispose of loose needles and syringes directly into green waste collection bins, recycling bins, drains or toilets, or post boxes.

[Download the safe needle disposal poster \(PDF 876KB\)](#)

Where to get help

If you have queries about finding discarded needles and syringes in your area, please contact your [local government environmental health officer \(external site\)](#).

See also

- > [Needle and syringe programs in WA](#)
- > [Where to find needle and syringe programs in WA](#)
- > [Treating needlestick injuries](#)