

Handling Needles Safely

In the Home and in the Community

Handling needles safely

Each year Capital Health receives reports of people who have been injured through contact with used syringes (needles).

Anyone who uses syringes or needles should make sure that they don't cause injury to others, particularly when you throw them away.

Why are used needles dangerous?

Used needles can contain very small amounts of blood, which in turn may carry viruses that cause serious diseases such as AIDS, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C. Even small amounts of blood can contain these viruses. If a person pokes him/herself accidentally with a used needle, there is a risk that he/she may become infected with HIV or Hepatitis viruses.

What is the risk of infection?

Although most blood does not contain viruses, there are a small number of people whose blood could spread infections. Since we do not always know whose blood is infectious, the safest approach is to always treat all blood as if it does contain germs.

How do needle injuries happen?

People could injure themselves if they find needles in the community and accidentally poke themselves. Curious children may play with needles they find at home or outside.

What should you do if you poke yourself with a needle?

Make the wound bleed by squeezing the area around it, then wash the area with soap and warm water.

Page the Needlestick Response Team (NRT) at 480-6598. The Needlestick Response Team will assess your situation and give you the help you need.

The Needlestick Response Team is on call 365 days of the year from 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.



How should you handle used syringes/needles?

When you handle needles, hold the syringe with the needle pointed down and carry it away from your body.

Do not recap the needle. Many injuries occur this way.

Never put medical sharps (needles, syringes and lancets) into trash, blue bags or recycling bins. By doing so, you put the health of workers at risk.

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How should you dispose of used needles, syringes, and lancets?

1. Place the items into a container made of strong plastic with a screw-top lid (like a peanut butter or bleach container), so the needles can't poke through. You can buy special containers called sharps containers at drugstores if you wish. Make sure the container sits on a flat surface and the lid is secure. **Keep the container out of the reach of children.** When you're ready to dispose of the container, tape it shut so needles won't fall out and injure anyone. Write on it, "Not for Recycling."



2. If you **LIVE OUTSIDE EDMONTON**, place the container into the household waste shortly before regular garbage pick-up.
3. If you **LIVE IN EDMONTON**, follow the instructions on the following pamphlet by the City of Edmonton.
4. You may also drop off your individual needle containers to the Canadian Diabetes Association (#1010, 10117 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta).

Needles do **not** belong in the blue bag or trash.

Never put medical sharps (needles, syringes and lancets) into trash, blue bags or recycling bins. By doing so, you put the health of workers at risk.

To dispose of sharps (needles, syringes and lancets), please call the **Waste Hotline** to find out which Edmonton pharmacies have a sharps disposal program.

If your pharmacy doesn't have a program, you can bring your household sharps to an Eco Station. Sharps must be in a labelled, hard plastic container (with a screw-top lid) such as an empty vinegar or bleach bottle.

Eco Stations are located at:

5150 – 99 Street (enter from 99 Street)
11440 – 143 Street

For hours of operation, call the Waste Hotline
At 496-5678 or www.edmonton.ca/waste



For more information regarding the safe disposal of needles,
please call Capital Health, Public Health Division
at 413-7928 or 413-7948

For more information, please contact your nearest Environmental Public Health Services office.

Edmonton Main Office	(780) 413-7928	Spruce Grove	(780) 962-7509
Capital Health Centre - South Tower	(780) 735-1400	Leduc	(780) 980-4644
Strathcona	(780) 467-5571	St. Albert	(780) 459-6671

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