

Safe Needle Disposal

This information outlines evidence-informed practices to improve the disposal and safe handling of discarded needles in the community.

STERILE NEEDLE DISTRIBUTION AND COLLECTION PROGRAMS

These programs provide sterile needles/syringes and other harm reduction supplies to people who use drugs to help prevent infections such as HIV and hepatitis, and prevent other health harms. These programs play a key role in safe needle disposal by:

- distributing sharps containers along with information about safe needle disposal to people who use drugs and other community members
- accepting used needles for disposal
- supporting other needle recovery efforts such as community needle drop boxes, needle sweeps in areas where programs operate or supporting other agencies that conduct needle pick up

To find locations in Manitoba see streetconnections.ca/locations

OTHER PARTNERS IN SAFE SHARPS DISPOSAL

Biomedical sharps waste containers are available at participating pharmacies of the Health Products Stewards Association (find a site at <https://healthsteward.ca/find-a-collection-location/>), and are distributed at no cost to any member of the public requesting one.

Further details about Health Products Stewards Association medical sharps (and medications) return programs are available in their government-approved program plan on the Wastewise website here: https://www.gov.mb.ca/sd/wastewise/pdf/plans/hpsa_plan.pdf.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND A DISCARDED NEEDLE

If you are comfortable and able to pick up the needle yourself, follow the steps below on safe needle pick up.

- Children should tell an adult and should not touch a discarded needle. Most needle pokes among children occur when they intentionally pick up a needle.

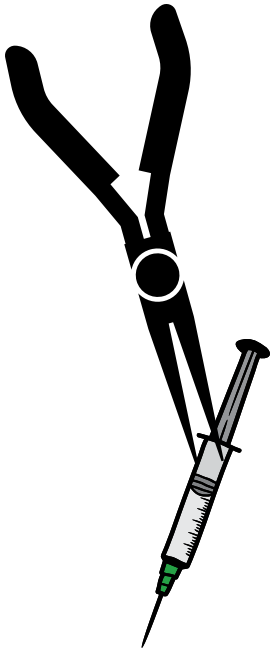
If you are not comfortable picking up the needle yourself, the following options are available:

- Call your local municipality, 211 (or search mb.211.ca) or your local public health office for information. Some communities have needle pick up services and partnerships.
- In Winnipeg, you can call 311 for needles found on public property. For needles on private property, you may contact Street Connections. For more information see streetconnections.ca/found-a-needle

Don't re-cap, bend or break/clip used needles. Do not pass hand to hand or to another person. However, if you use needles on yourself and you don't have a suitable sharps container, you may recap your own needle to help protect others from needle pokes.

HOW TO SAFELY PICK UP A NEEDLE

If there are many needles in a pile or needles broken into pieces, pick up is more complicated and you may ask for assistance through one of the options above. If you are comfortable doing so, you may gently separate piled needles with a stick or trash picker so that they can be safely picked up individually. Ensure there is enough light to assess the area. Wear closed toed shoes made of thick material if you have them.



1. If you don't have an approved sharps container, you can use a sturdy thick plastic container with a lid like a detergent, bleach or pop bottle.
2. Place the container on a stable surface nearby the needle(s). Never hold it in your hand while placing a needle in it. If you are doing a community needle sweep, you may place the container inside a large bucket.
3. Wear gloves if you have them (work gloves, puncture resistant gloves, rubber or nitrile/latex gloves). You may use pliers, tongs or a trash grabber/picker if you have them.
4. A needle attached to a syringe can be safely picked up from the plunger end of the syringe with pliers, tongs, a trash gripper/picker or even your gloved hand. Never handle the sharp end of the needle/syringe even if you have puncture proof gloves. You may also use a dust pan and broom to sweep up needle debris.
5. Pick up needle (s) pointing away from your body. Put the needle into the container sharp end (needle) first. Never hand it to someone else. Don't put other trash like wrappers into the sharps container.
6. After removing your gloves, wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Don't overfill the sharps container (fill to two thirds full or to the fill line). Close and seal the sharps container, engage the lock if there is one or tape the lid closed. You may want to label the container "needles" if you are delayed in getting it to a drop off location. Never re-open a sealed sharps container.

WHERE TO DISPOSE OF A NEEDLE

In a community needle drop box, or

A filled and sealed sharps container may be brought to:

- a needle drop off location. Search "needle dropoff" under Services at streetconnections.ca/locations
- a public health office
- a pharmacy participating in the Health Products Stewards Association (HPSA). Find a location at <https://healthsteward.ca/find-a-collection-location/>
 - Medical sharps returned to pharmacies under this program must be in a HPSA-labelled medical sharps containers or other hard-shell containers with the universal biohazard symbol.



Some municipalities permit needles or sharps in sealed puncture proof containers to be placed into the municipal trash by residents or home owners if they cannot dispose of needles and syringes at a clinic, doctor's office or pharmacy. Check with your local municipality.

If you are a health service or other business that is a generator of biomedical or clinical sharps waste (including from tattoo, piercings, acupuncture, or other injections) you are required to manage and dispose of biomedical/clinical sharps waste according to The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act [C.C.S.M. c. D12](#)). For information, see [Environment and Climate Change | Province of Manitoba](#).

Additional municipal regulations may also apply, such as The City of Winnipeg – Body Modification By-Law (No. 40/2005): [City Clerk's eGovernment](#) and Bio-Medical Waste Sharps By-Law: [6001/92-C](#)

WHAT IF A NEEDLE POKES ME?

The risk of infection from a discarded needle poke in the community is low, but it is important to take precautions.

- Wash the area with warm water, do not squeeze.
- Attend your local health centre, nursing station, urgent care or emergency room as soon as possible. You will be assessed for health risks from the needle poke.



Based on the needle poke risk, a health care provider may provide a vaccine against hepatitis B and/or tetanus, and you may be given medication to help prevent HIV infection from the needle poke. Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) must be started within 72 hours, though it is more effective if started earlier.

If you are not sure, call Health Links at 204 788-8200 for advice.

For more information see:

Public Health Harm Reduction

<https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/harm-reduction.html>

WasteWise | Province of Manitoba

www.gov.mb.ca/sd/wastewise/a-z.html?letter=n

Health Products Stewardship Association

<https://streetconnections.ca/>

Home – Street Connections

<https://streetconnections.ca/>