

# Safe retrieval & disposal of needles and syringes

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*The risk of contracting HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) or other blood borne viruses by injuring yourself with a needle and syringe is very low.*

## What to do if you find a discarded needle and syringe

If you do not want to dispose of the needle and syringe yourself, or if it is in an awkward place, contact the 24 hour Disposal Help-line for more information or to arrange for it to be removed.

**Disposal Help-line  
1800 552 355**

## OR

If you are removing it yourself:

- Wear latex or plastic gloves for protection. Thicker gloves, such as gardening gloves, make it difficult to pick up the needle and syringe.
- Take an approved disposal container and lid to the site. These containers are available from all Needle and Syringe Programs and most local councils. If you do not have one, use a hard plastic container such as an empty detergent bottle. **Do not** use glass bottles, as these can break.

- If it is difficult to reach, carefully remove rubbish or other material around it so that you have direct access to it.
- If there is more than one needle and syringe separate them by using a stick or the end of a broom. **Do this carefully.** Each needle and syringe can then be picked up individually.
- Pick up the needle and syringe by the barrel (plastic end). **Do not** pick it up by the needle end. Make sure the needle is pointing away from you.
- **Never** recap a needle and syringe, even if the cap is also discarded.
- Place the needle and syringe, needle end first, into the container. The container should be on a stable surface and not held by hand.
- Secure the lid on the container.
- Take the gloves and put them in a plastic bag. Tie a knot at the end of the bag and place it in a rubbish bin.
- Wash your hands with soap and water.
- To dispose of the container take it to your local Needle and Syringe Program, local council office or contact the Disposal Help-line for further advice. Do not dispose of needle and syringes in rubbish bins, drains or toilets.

## What to do if you get a needle stick injury

If you get pricked by a discarded needle and syringe (often referred to as a 'needle stick injury'), the following steps should be taken:

- Flush the area with flowing water.
- Wash the wound well with soap and hot water.
- Put antiseptic on the wound with a waterproof band-aid.
- Seek medical attention for an assessment of the risk of infection and appropriate treatment.
- If the needle and syringe cannot be retrieved, mark the area so others are not at risk and contact the Help-line.