



# SAFE NEEDLE DISPOSAL TOOL KIT

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**A clean and safe Edmonton  
is a shared responsibility**



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Needles and needle debris are a challenging issue for the City of Edmonton, however Edmonton is not alone. Strategies to ensure that individuals and communities are as safe and healthy as possible have been undertaken across the globe. Needles are used by people with specific health conditions and people with specific addictions. Ensuring that people who use needles can access safe disposal, and that stray needles and needle debris in the community are dealt with promptly and safely is one of the goals of Capital City Clean Up. The following pages outline activities that multiple stakeholders have decided are the best practices for the health and safety of the citizens of Edmonton.

## A. WHO IS TAKING THE LEAD FOR THE SAFE NEEDLE DISPOSAL TOOL KIT?

The Safe Needle Disposal Tool Kit provides important information on safe needle disposal practices. Initially, this tool kit was part of the Edmonton Safe Streets project of Safer Cities that began in 1999.

Several public agencies, community organizations and citizens formed a partnership to take action on community concerns about discarded needles on the streets of Edmonton.

In 2010 the initiative moved over to Capital City Clean Up (CCCU) as part of its efforts to maintain a clean and safe Edmonton.

### The partnership has four goals:

1. Raise community awareness about needle safety.
2. Reduce the number of discarded needles on our streets.
3. Reduce the risk and prevent injury to the public, especially children, who find discarded needles.
4. Provide options for safe disposal of needles where the need exists.

### Who are the partners?

The partners include:

- City of Edmonton: Community Services, Fire Rescue Services, Waste Management
- REACH Edmonton Council
- Alberta Health Services
- Edmonton Police Service
- Streetworks
- HIV Edmonton
- Prostitution Awareness and Action Foundation
- Citizens at large
- The Support Network/211
- Edmonton Public Schools
- Edmonton Catholic Schools



### What resources are available?

CCCU can provide a variety of resources and support to communities and individuals interested in safe needle disposal.

- Safe Needle Disposal Tool Kit available on-line
- A series of 4 posters about needle safety aimed at children, general public and needle users.
- Provide static information at local trade shows and safety fairs
- Current information on safe needle box locations and collection statistics
- Information on how communities can explore the need for a safe needle box in their neighbourhood

### Who can you contact?

To access any of the services listed above, please call CCCU at **(780) 944-5470** or visit **[www.edmonton.ca/capitalcitycleanup](http://www.edmonton.ca/capitalcitycleanup)**

## B. WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT NEEDLE-USE IN EDMONTON?

People use needles for many different purposes. There are many medical conditions that involve using needles at home. Diabetes is the most common. People with conditions like cancer and arthritis use needles to control pain.

- Some people inject drugs because they have an addiction.
- People who use injection drugs have said they do not intend to harm other people in the community when they are getting rid of used needles. They will throw out needles safely if there are safe choices available.
- Everyone who uses needles has the same need to get rid of their used needles safely. With safe disposal, no one gets hurt accidentally.

### Choices for disposing of needles

- Many **pharmacies** take back needles from their customers. All Eco Stations accept needles from households only.
- **Streetworks** is a free needle exchange service for injection drug users with four sites and a mobile van. People who inject drugs can exchange their used needles for clean ones to reduce harm to their health. Over 800,000 needles are exchanged through Streetworks each year.
- **Capital City Clean Up**, through the partnership, organizes placing safe needle boxes in communities asking for a box.
- **City of Edmonton** staff install and empty the safe needle boxes. They have been painted yellow for easy identification.
- **Edmonton Police Service** supports the safe needle boxes as one way to make communities safer.
- Disposed needles from Streetworks and the needle boxes end up at Wainwright, Alberta where they are burned.

Safe needle boxes have been installed outside where needles have been found on the ground and are a safety concern for the community. Between March 2002 and December 2009, people put over 50,000 needles in the safe needle boxes in our community.



**“NEARLY 800,000 NEEDLES  
ARE EXCHANGED THROUGH  
STREETWORKS EACH YEAR.”**

## C. SAFE NEEDLE DISPOSAL IN PICTURES

The syringes and needles used at home or by injection drug users look the same as the syringe and needle you see in a doctor's office. Needles are also called "sharps".

### What does a lancet look like?



People with diabetes use a lancet - a very small needle - to prick their finger to draw a small amount of blood. They do this several times each week to check the level of sugar in their blood. The needle sits inside a holder, or lancing device.

Syringes, needles and lancets are known as "needle debris."

### What does a needle clip device look like?

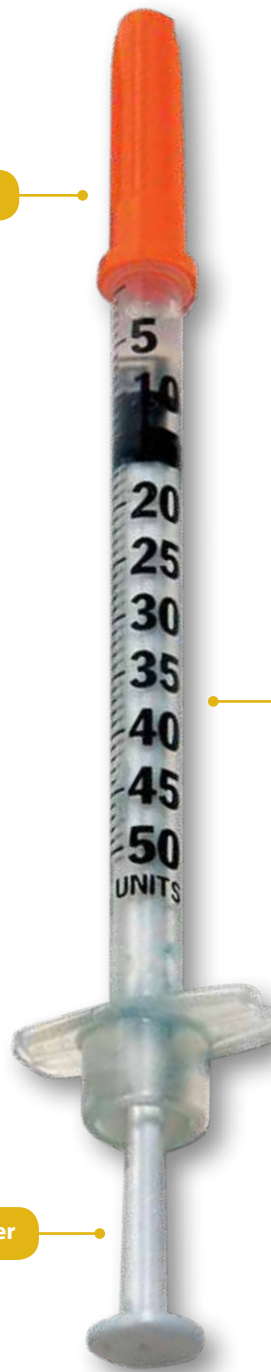


A needle clip device is used by diabetics to clip the needles they use to inject insulin. Its opening is only large enough for a needle to fit through. The sides push together to clip the needle from the syringe. The purpose is to seal the needles in a container so that no one else gets accidentally poked.

needle cap

barrel

plunger



## C. SAFE NEEDLE DISPOSAL IN PICTURES (continued)



### What does the yellow safe needle box look like?

These boxes are only for collecting used needles. You can take expired medication to any pharmacy. Call **311** to ask questions about what you can take to the City of Edmonton Eco Stations.

If your community would like to have an outdoor safe needle box installed, call Capital City Clean Up at **(780) 944-5470** to discuss the steps you can take.



### What is a sharps container?

A sharps container is made of hard plastic with a small opening at the top. It is especially made for safely holding used needles, syringes and lancets. Sharps containers, or "biohazard containers", come in various sizes and can hold a large number of needles. You can buy a sharps container at a pharmacy.

## D. WHO CAN GET POKED ACCIDENTALLY?

People using needles need a way to throw them out after they are finished using them. Without **wanting** to harm anyone else, they may throw the needles in the garbage or on the ground if they don't see an easy way to get rid of them safely. Anyone can get hurt if they accidentally get poked.

### How could a person get hurt?

- A person who tries to put the cap back on a needle can easily get poked.
- A person looking through garbage for pop cans and empty bottles can get poked if someone tossed a needle in the bin.
- A parks maintenance person can get poked if there are needles hidden in a flowerbed or under a shrub in a park.
- A person who picks up a needle while walking along the street or an alley can get poked if it is not handled properly. Carrying loose needles, without a container, frequently leads to an accidental poke.
- A worker who is cleaning public washrooms or hotel rooms can get poked if needles are hidden in kleenex or waste baskets.
- A curious child in a playground can pick up a needle tucked under a bush. That needle could end up in his or her mouth.



- A city waste collector can get poked by a needle sticking out of a garbage bag. Even needles in food containers can poke out if the container gets crushed.
- A child attracted to something shiny or an adult reaching under a heating vent in the hallway of an apartment building can get poked by a needle pushed underneath.
- A person working at Edmonton's Materials Recovery Facility (the recycling plant) can get poked while sorting recycled items.
- In addition to people getting hurt, a dog or cat can get poked wandering through bushes where needles are hidden.

These are just a few examples. You can imagine many more situations where someone could get poked if needles are not safely discarded.

## **E. WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF TOUCHING USED NEEDLES OR BEING POKED BY A NEEDLE?**

We know picking up other people's garbage with bare hands is not a good idea because it's an easy way to come in contact with germs. Needles are like other garbage. Picking up needles with your bare hands is a way to get a skin infection if you have an opening in your skin.

When a person finishes using a needle, some of that person's blood may still be inside the needle or syringe. If you get poked by a needle and the blood gets into your bloodstream, you could get sick as well.

The vast majority of people will not get sick by picking up or being poked by a used needle, but it is extremely important to be cautious. When viruses in needles are exposed to the open air, most will die within minutes to hours or longer. There is no way to know how long a needle has been lying where you found it, so it is best to be safe.



**“THIS IS A SAFETY ISSUE. IT’S  
NOTHING PERSONAL. IT DOESN’T  
MATTER IF THE PERSON IS A DIABETIC  
OR AN INJECTION DRUG USER. THIS  
IS A HEALTH CONCERN.”**

**– HEALTH PROFESSIONAL**

## **E. WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF TOUCHING USED NEEDLES OR BEING POKED BY A NEEDLE? (continued)**

### **What are Hepatitis B and C?**

Hepatitis is a disease of the liver, caused by a virus.

- Hepatitis B and C are spread from the blood or body fluids of one person who has hepatitis to the blood or body fluids of another person.
- You may get hepatitis if you share needles or other injection equipment.
- You may get the disease if you get poked by a needle with infected blood on it.

- You may get the disease if you have sex with someone who is infected.

You can prevent getting or passing Hepatitis B & C to someone else by ...

- getting the Hepatitis B vaccine.
- using clean needles and equipment every time.
- practicing safer sex by using a condom.

- **Hepatitis C can live for a long time outside of the body**
- **Most people recover completely if they get sick with Hepatitis B.**
- **There is no vaccine to prevent Hepatitis C.**
- **Only 3 of every 10 people with Hepatitis C know they have the disease and most carry the virus for a long time.**
- **Treatment is possible.**

### **What are HIV and AIDS?**

The body is usually protected from illness by the immune system. When Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infects the body, it weakens the immune system. The infected person can easily get sick with rare and hard to treat infections and cancers. When the immune system is badly damaged, a person can develop Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

- HIV is found in all body fluids of an infected person. It is spread through blood, semen, vaginal secretions and breast milk.

- HIV is spread by having unprotected sex.
- HIV is spread by sharing needles and injection equipment.

You can greatly reduce the risk of getting or spreading HIV...

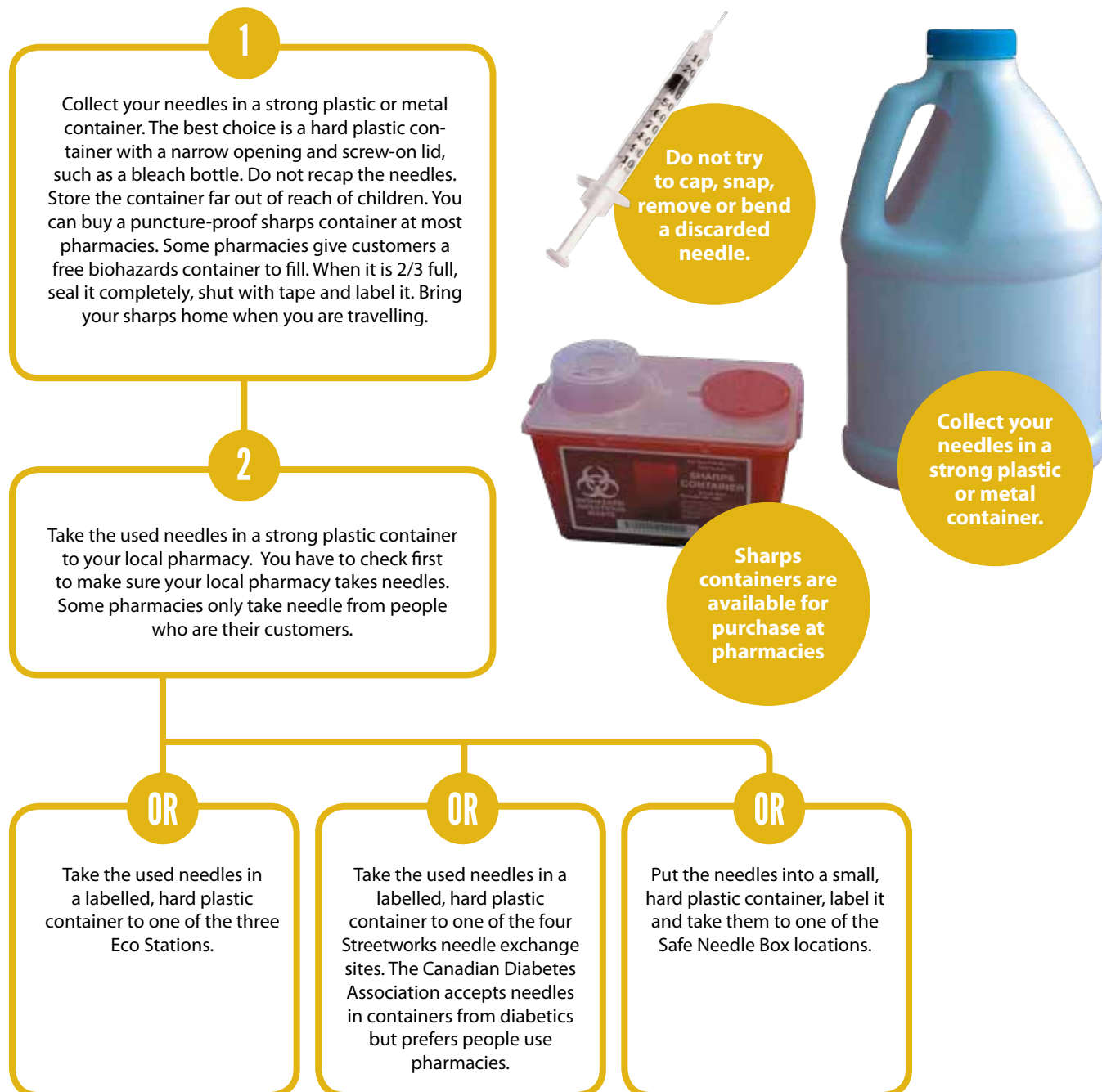
- If you practice safer sex, using a condom.
- If you use clean needles every time.

- **The HIV virus dies quickly when exposed to air.**
- **There are many medications that can keep an individual healthy for many years.**
- **There is no vaccine and no cure for HIV at this time.**

## F. WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH YOUR USED NEEDLES?

There are safe and unsafe ways to get rid of used needles that reduce risks for others.

### Safe ways to dispose of needles



## F. WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH YOUR USED NEEDLES? *(continued)*

Unsafe ways to dispose of needles	Why is it unsafe?
<b>X</b> Putting needles in the garbage.	Waste collectors can get poked if the needles are loose or in a container. Containers can get crushed and the needles come through. The Waste Management Bylaw states you cannot put needles in the garbage or blue bags.
<b>X</b> Putting needles in the recycling bag or blue bin.	Waste Management workers sort all the recycled items we put in blue bags by hand. A worker could get poked by a needle.
<b>X</b> Putting needles down the toilet.  Putting needles down the sewer.	The needles go into the sewer system and then into the river. Someone could get poked and it is environmentally unclean.
<b>X</b> Putting needles on the ground or under a bush.	A child, adult or pet could get scratched or poked.
<b>X</b> Tucking needles into places they won't be seen.	A person cleaning, such as a janitor or housekeeping staff, could get hurt.



**A PERSON LOOKING THROUGH GARBAGE FOR POP CANS AND EMPTY BOTTLES CAN GET POKED IF SOMEONE HAS TOSSED A NEEDLE IN THE BIN.**

## G. WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU SEE A NEEDLE SOMEONE ELSE HAS THROWN AWAY?

### Children ...

You should leave the needle where it is. Call an adult for help.

### Adults ...

If you see a needle, you can pick it up so that a child does not get injured or poked. You can pick the needle up carefully by following these four steps or you can call for help (see below). You don't need to be afraid if you're cautious.

1. Use a pair of tongs, pliers or tweezers to pick up the needle. It is best to wear rubber gloves.
2. Pick the needle up by pointing the needle tip down and away from you.
3. Put the needle in a strong container, on a stable surface, and tape the lid tightly closed (with duct tape, if you have it). Bleach bottles are good because they have a small opening and a screw-on lid. A thick plastic peanut butter jar will work. You shouldn't use a glass jar or light plastic or a milk carton. Glass can break and needles easily poke through light plastic or milk cartons. **IMPORTANT: Do not try to put the cap back on the needle.**
4. Take the container to a pharmacy or to one of Edmonton's three Eco Stations (See Places to take needles). If you can't get to a pharmacy or an Eco Station, you can take it to a local fire or police station. You can put it in one of the yellow safe needle boxes or give it to someone at Streetworks.

### OR

If you are not comfortable picking up the needle and need more information, you can call the City of Edmonton at 311 or the Support Network at 211.

### OR

If you are not comfortable picking up the needle and want someone to pick it up for you, you can call (780) 496-3900 and someone from Edmonton's Fire Rescue Services will come and collect it. That might take a few hours if they are busy with emergencies when you call.

What will help you decide if you should call for help?

- If you are too nervous to pick it up.
- If you see many needles in a pile, for example, in a stairwell or behind a dumpster.
- If you see broken needles scattered on the ground.
- If you have no way of taking the needle in a strong container to a safe place.



**211** is an easy to remember number that connects people to a full range of non-emergency social, health and government services within the community of Edmonton. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, Certified Information and Referral Specialists answer 211 calls, assess the needs of callers and link them to the best available information and services. The 211 program in Edmonton is a joint initiative of The Support Network, the City of Edmonton, the Government of Alberta and the United Way of the Alberta Capital Region.

**311** is also available 24/7, seven days a week. This City of Edmonton service is a one stop call centre where agents can resolve issues and connect you with appropriate departments.

# STEPS TO SAFE NEEDLE DISPOSAL

**1**

Do not try to put the cap back on the needle, snap, remove or bend needles.



**2**

Pick the needle up carefully with tongs or tweezers.

OR

Call **311** or **211** for more information.

OR

Call (780) 496-3900 for Fire Rescue Services to collect it.

**3**

Put the needle in a hard plastic container, tightly seal and label it.



OR

Call **311** or **211** for more information.

OR

Call (780) 496-3900 for Fire Rescue Services to collect it.

**4**

Take the needle to **Streetworks Needle Exchange Site** or to one of **Edmonton's three Eco Stations**.

OR

Take the needle to a **pharmacy that accepts needles**.

OR

Take the needle to one of the **yellow safe needle boxes**.



## H. PLACES TO TAKE NEEDLES

### Safe Needle Box Locations

#### AADAC

Recovery Centre In the alley behind the Detox Centre  
10302 107 Street

#### Boyle McCauley Health Centre

In front of and in the alley behind the Health Centre  
10628 96 Street

#### Boyle Street Community Services

10116 105 Avenue

#### George Spady Centre

Behind George Spady  
10015 105A Avenue

#### Herb Jamieson Centre

10014 105 Avenue

#### Salvation Army Family Centre

9630 101 Avenue

#### Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre

In the parking lot next to WEAC  
9611 101A Avenue

#### Herb Jamieson Centre

10014 105 Avenue  
(southeast corner)

#### Bissell Thrift Store

8818-118 Avenue

### Boxes with larger openings for larger containers:

#### Bissell Centre

Next to the Bissell Centre  
10527 96 Street

#### Urban Manor

9524 104 Avenue

#### Boys and Girls Club

94 Street and 109 Avenue

### Streetworks - Needle Exchange Sites

#### Boyle Street

#### Community Services

10116 105 Avenue  
(780) 424-4106 (Ext. 210 or 211)

#### Boyle McCauley Health Centre

10628 96 Street  
(780) 422-7333 (ext.1)

#### STD Centre

11111 Jasper Avenue  
(780) 342-2300

#### HIV Edmonton

9702-111 Ave  
(780) 488-5742

### Van Hours

#### 8:30 p.m. – 12:30 a.m.

Cruising 107 Ave., The Hill, Downtown Area, 124 St., 118 Ave., behind former Cromdale Hotel site  
9 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.  
(Tuesday - Sunday)

Phone between 8:30 p.m. – midnight for an exchange

Phone Number: (780) 990-6641

If your community would like to have a safe needle disposal box installed, call Capital City Clean Up at (780) 944-5470 to discuss the steps you can take.

**“SHOP OWNERS IN THE INNER CITY SAY THE BOXES HAVE MADE A REMARKABLE DIFFERENCE IN THE NUMBER OF NEEDLES SEEN AROUND THEIR BUSINESSES. IT’S DEFINITELY THE WAY TO GO.”**

**– CITY EMPLOYEE**



## H. PLACES TO TAKE NEEDLES (continued)

### Three City of Edmonton Eco Stations

**Strathcona:**

5150 99 Street  
(entrance on 99 Street)

**Ambleside:**

14710 Ellerslie Road

**Coronation:**

11440 143 Street

Please call 311 or go to [www.edmonton.ca/waste](http://www.edmonton.ca/waste) for specific dates and current information. Some pharmacies accept needles from customers brought to them in an approved sharps container. Some do not take any needles.

### Eco Stations Hours of Operation

**Winter Hours**

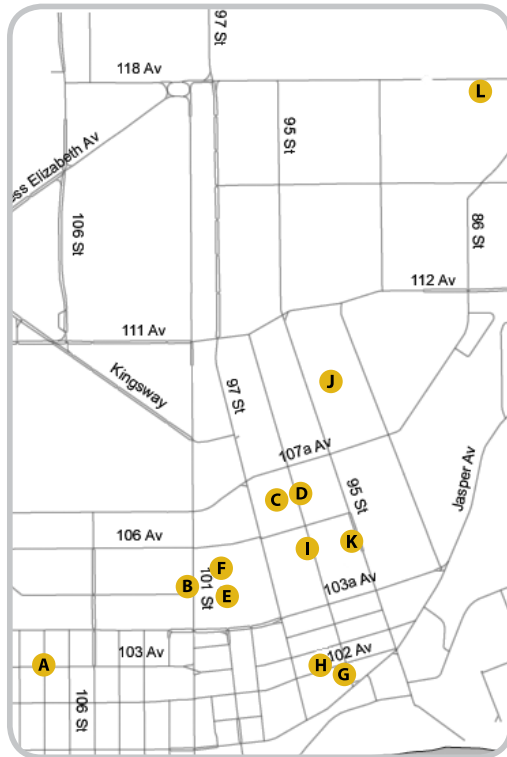
November 23, 2010 to March 26, 2011  
9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Tuesday - Saturday  
Closed Sunday, Monday and statutory holidays

**Summer Hours**

March 28, 2011 to November 19, 2011  
9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., Monday - Saturday  
Closed Sunday and statutory holidays



# LOCATIONS OF SAFE NEEDLE BOXES



**AADAC**  
Recovery Centre In  
the alley behind the  
Detox Centre  
10302 107 Street



**Boyle Street  
Community Services**  
In the alley behind  
10116 105 Avenue



**Boyle McCauley  
Health Centre**  
In the front  
10628 96 Street



**Boyle McCauley  
Health Centre**  
In the alley  
10628 96 Street



**Herb Jamieson Centre**  
10014 105 Avenue



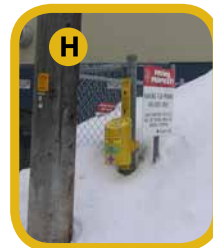
**George Spady Centre**  
Behind George Spady  
10015 105A Avenue



**Herb Jamieson  
Centre**  
10014 105 Avenue  
(SE corner)



**Women's Emergency  
Accommodation Centre**  
In the parking lot  
next to WEAC  
9611 101A Avenue



**Salvation Army**  
9611 101 Avenue  
(rear alley)



**Bissell Centre**  
Next to the  
Bissell Centre  
10527 96 Street



**Boys and Girls Club**  
94 Street and  
109 Avenue



**Urban Manor**  
9524 104 Avenue



**Bissell Thrift Store**  
8818 118 Avenue

Remove this poster and place it in a visible area.

## I. WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU GET POKED BY A NEEDLE?

- **Squeeze** out as much blood as you can.
- **Wash** the poke site right away with soap and warm water.
- **Call Alberta Health LINK** at (780) 408-LINK (408-5465)



## J. LINKS TO MORE INFORMATION

### Needle disposal links

- 1. Call 311 at City of Edmonton**  
For information about any needle related issues, call 311 to speak to an agent who can provide information and make referrals to most needle related questions.
- 2. Call 211 at The Support Network**  
For information about any needle related issues, call 211 to Speak to trained and informed operators who can provide information and make referrals to most needle related questions.  
[www.thesupportnetwork.com](http://www.thesupportnetwork.com)
- 3. Eco Stations**  
311  
Go to [www.edmonton.ca/waste](http://www.edmonton.ca/waste), for a description of Edmonton's Eco Stations and what to do with hazardous household waste.
- 4. Canadian Diabetes Association Collection Program:**  
(780) 414-0070  
Toll free 1-800-226-8464  
10117 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, AB.  
People with diabetes can return their needles here.  
[www.diabetes.ca](http://www.diabetes.ca) for information about diabetes.
- 5. G-M Pearson Biomedical Waste Specialist Ltd.:**  
(780) 473-6633  
Company picks up sharps and other waste materials from commercial places, including pharmacies, and health care facilities, for a fee. Materials are sent to Wainwright to be burned.

### Health information links

- 1. Alberta Health Link:**  
(780) 408-LINK (408-5465)  
Registered Nurses provide advice and information 24 hours a day. Visit [www.albertahealthservices.ca](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca) and scroll through the links for information on health topics and available services.
- STD Centre and STD/AIDS Info Line:**  
(780) 342-2300  
Toll Free: 1-800-772-2437  
11111 Jasper Ave, 3B20  
Free confidential counseling. Free treatment for most Sexually Transmitted Diseases.
- 2. HIV Edmonton:**  
(780) 488-5742  
9702 - 111 Ave  
[www.hivedmonton.com](http://www.hivedmonton.com) for complete information on HIV and AIDS and Hepatitis C and available services.
- 3. Streetworks**  
(at Boyle Street Community Services):  
(780) 424-4106 (ext. 210 or 211)  
[www.streetworks.ca](http://www.streetworks.ca) for information on needle use, addictions, health care and available services.
- 4. Canadian Liver Foundation:**  
(780) 444-1547  
Toll Free: 1-888-557-5516 [www.liver.ca](http://www.liver.ca) for information on the liver and Hepatitis A, B and C.
- 5. Alberta Health Services Addictions Help Line**  
1-866-332-2322  
[www.albertahealthservices.ca](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca)  
The Addiction Helpline offers alcohol, tobacco, other drug and problem gambling information as well as support and referral services to callers accessing this toll-free, 24 hour, confidential help line.

