SAFE NEEDLE DISPOSAL TOOL KIT

A clean and safe Edmonton is a shared responsibility
WHAT’S IN THE
SAFE NEEDLE DISPOSAL TOOL KIT?

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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: Citizen Services, Fire Rescue Services, Civic Operations
- 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
- 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 visit www.edmonton.ca/capitalcitycleanup or email capitalcitycleanup@edmonton.ca
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 may use needles to administer medications 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 15 sites and a mobile van. People who inject drugs can exchange their used needles for clean ones to reduce harm to their health. Over 2.2 million 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 Swan Hills, Alberta where they are incinerated.

Safe needle boxes have been installed outside where needles have been found on the ground and are a safety concern for the community.
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 and storage 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.
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, email capitalcitycleanup@edmonton.ca

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 local pharmacy, safety supply or medical supply store.
**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 or in the sand. That needle could end up in his or her mouth or they could get poked.

- 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 B 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

1. Collect your needles in a strong plastic or metal container. The best choice is a hard plastic container with a narrow opening and screw-on lid, such as a bleach bottle. Do not recap the needles. Store the container far out of reach of children. You can buy a puncture-proof sharps container at most pharmacies. Some pharmacies give customers a free biohazards container to fill. When it is 2/3 full, seal it completely, shut with tape and label it. Bring your sharps home when you are travelling.

2. Take the used needles in a strong plastic container to your local pharmacy. You have to check first to make sure your local pharmacy takes needles. Some pharmacies only take needle from people who are their customers.

OR

Take the used needles in a labelled, hard plastic container to one of the four Eco Stations.

OR

Take the used needles in a labelled, hard plastic container to one of the 15 Streetworks needle exchange sites. The Canadian Diabetes Association accepts needles in containers from diabetics but prefers people use pharmacies.

Collect your needles in a strong plastic or metal container.

Sharps containers are available for purchase at pharmacies.

Do not try to cap, snap, remove or bend a discarded needle.
### F. What can you do with your used needles? (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unsafe ways to dispose of needles</th>
<th>Why is it unsafe?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Putting needles in the garbage.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putting needles in the recycling bag or blue bin.</td>
<td>Waste Management workers sort all the recycled items we put in blue bags by hand. A worker could get poked by a needle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putting needles down the toilet.</td>
<td>The needles go into the sewer system and then into the river. Someone could get poked and it is environmentally unclean. e.g. sewer workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putting needles down the sewer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putting needles on the ground or under a bush.</td>
<td>A child, adult or pet could get scratched or poked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tucking needles into places they won’t be seen.</td>
<td>A person cleaning, such as a janitor or housekeeping staff, could get hurt.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 four 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 located on public property and want someone to pick it up for you, you can call 311 and someone will come and collect it. That might take a few hours if they are busy when you call. Needles found on private property should be disposed of by the property owner.

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.

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.
SAFE NEEDLE DISPOSAL TOOL KIT

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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 for more information.

3. Put the needle in a hard plastic container, tightly seal and label it.
   OR
   Call 311 for more information.

4. Take the needle to Streetworks Needle Exchange Site or to one of Edmonton’s four 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
10242-105 Street
(780) 488-5742

Streetworks 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

“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

If your community would like to have a safe needle disposal box installed, email capitalcitycleanup@edmonton.ca
H. PLACES TO TAKE NEEDLES (continued)

Four City of Edmonton Eco Stations

**Strathcona:**
5150 99 Street
(entrance on 99 Street)

**Ambleside:**
14710 Ellerslie Road

**Coronation:**
11440 143 Street

**Kennedale:**
5355 - 127 Avenue

Please call 311 or go to 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.
LOCATIONS OF SAFE NEEDLE BOXES

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

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

3. **Boyle McCauley Health Centre**
   - In the front
   - 10628 96 Street

4. **Boyle McCauley Health Centre**
   - In the alley
   - 10628 96 Street

5. **Herb Jamieson Centre**
   - 10014 105 Avenue
   - (SE corner)

6. **Women’s Emergency Accommodation Centre**
   - In the parking lot
   - next to WEAC
   - 9611 101A Avenue

7. **Salvation Army**
   - 9611 101 Avenue
   - (rear alley)

8. **Bissell Centre**
   - Next to the Bissell Centre
   - 10527 96 Street

9. **Urban Manor**
    - 9524 104 Avenue

10. **Bissell Thrift Store**
    - 8818 118 Avenue

11. **Boys and Girls Club**
    - 94 Street and 109 Avenue

12. **George Spady Centre**
    - Behind George Spady
    - 10015 105A Avenue

13. **Herb Jamieson Centre**
    - 10014 105 Avenue
    - (SE corner)
I. WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU GET POKED BY A NEEDLE?

- **Allow** wound to bleed freely.
- **Wash** the poke site right away with soap and warm water or alcohol-based hand rub (sanitizer).
- **Call** Alberta Health LINK at 811
- **Seek medical attention as soon as possible.**
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. Eco Stations
   311
   Go to www.edmonton.ca/waste, for a description of Edmonton’s Eco Stations and what to do with hazardous household waste.

3. 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.

4. 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 and scroll through the links for information on health topics and available services.

2. STD Centre and STD/AIDS Info Line:
   (780) 342-2300
   Toll Free: 1-800-772-2437
   1111 Jasper Ave, 3B20
   Free confidential counseling. Free treatment for most Sexually Transmitted Diseases.

3. Streetworks
   (at Boyle Street Community Services):
   (780) 424-4106 (ext. 210 or 211)
   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 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
   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.