

Talking to children about needles

Teaching children about needle safety

- It is helpful to discuss needle safety with children when talking about other hazards, including sharp objects such as broken glass or broken playground equipment or other objects such as cigarette butts or condoms.
- It is important to teach children never to touch a needle and tell a trusted adult if they find one.
- Show children a picture of a needle so they know what one looks like in case they find one.

It is important to teach children what to do if they find improperly discarded needles.

- Children may find used needles at home or in the community.
- A diverse range of community members, including people who use drugs and people with diabetes and other medical conditions, use needles and syringes.
- Sometimes people throw needles in the garbage, or on the ground, especially if there is no safe disposal options easily accessible to them.
- Needle stick injuries can happen when a needle from a syringe pokes or cuts through the skin. Getting a needle stick injury can be upsetting. It is important to know the risk of getting an infection such as HIV or Hepatitis B or C from a needle stick injury is low.



Some messages you can use to discuss needle safety with children:

"Do not touch needles."

- ➡ "Needles are sharp and may hurt you."
- ➡ "They can also carry germs."

"Tell an adult you trust about the needle."

- ➡ "If you are playing with friends and find a needle on the ground, ask one friend to make sure no one touches it and go get an adult."
- ➡ "It is an adult's job to make sure a needle is thrown away properly."

When a child asks: Why are there needles on the ground.

Children can be curious about discarded needles. Below are some suggested responses to their questions

For young children, keep it simple.

“Someone was using that needle to put something inside their body. It is not safe to leave the needle in a public space because it could hurt someone. Always tell an adult if you find a needle.”



Older children may require more information.

- ↪ People use needles for many reasons.
- ↪ Some medical conditions require people to use needles for medicine.
- ↪ People also use needles to inject drugs.
- ↪ It is not safe to leave needles in public spaces because someone could get hurt.
- ↪ People who use needles do not leave them out to intentionally hurt other people.
- ↪ Sometimes needles are dropped by accident or people do not know where to dispose of them.
- ↪ We know it is not safe to leave a needle on the ground and it is important to know how to throw them away properly.



Additional resources

Public libraries are a great place to find age-appropriate resources for children and youth to help guide conversations around difficult topics, including needle safety and substance use.

Additional resources include:

[Shelter: Homelessness in our Community](#)

- Lois Peterson

[Drug Education is Conversation](#)

- University of Victoria & Centre Institute for Substance Use Research

[See a Needle?](#) - Lauri Watkins

[Language Matters](#) - Fraser Health

[Safe Sharps Disposal](#) - Fraser Health

[Disposing of Needles Safely Fact Sheet](#) - Fraser Health

[Talking to Teenagers about Drugs and Alcohol](#)

- Government of Canada

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