

What to do if I find a needle or syringe?



Interlake-Eastern
Regional Health Authority

Adults...

If you see a needle, you can pick it up to protect someone else from being accidentally poked. You just need to be careful.

How do I get rid of a needle?

1. Do not try to put the cap back on the needle. Use a pair of tongs, pliers or tweezers to pick up the needle.
2. Pick the needle up by pointing the needle tip down and away from you.
3. Put the needle in a sturdy container, on a stable surface. Tape the container lid tightly closed (duct tape if possible) for extra security.
4. Bleach bottles are good because they have a small opening and a screw-on lid. A plastic soda pop bottle will work, but be sure needles do not poke through. **Do not use glass jars** because they can break.
5. Put the container in the regular garbage, not into recycling.

or

If you are not comfortable picking up a discarded needle, call the Selkirk Public Health Office for guidance at 204-785-4891.

Children...

- Do not touch it!
- Leave the needle where it is.
- Tell an adult so they can take care of it.

What if a needle pokes me?

The risk of infection from a discarded needle is very low, but it is important to take care of this kind of injury.

Step 1

Allow the puncture site to bleed. This helps flush germs away.

Step 2

Wash the area well with soap and water.

Step 3

Go to any emergency room as soon as possible. The sooner you see a doctor or nurse, the better. They will be able to assess exposure risk and provide necessary care.

When should I call for help?

- If you are not able to safely 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.

What will happen if I go to the hospital with a needle poke?

- You will be assessed for health risks from the needle poke.
- You may be given a vaccine against hepatitis B.
- You might have blood drawn to make sure you did not have hepatitis B or C, or HIV before being poked.
- In very few cases, you might be given medication to help prevent becoming infected by HIV/AIDS. This is very rarely necessary.

When viruses in needles are exposed to the air, the viruses usually die. There is no way to know how long a needle has been lying where you found it, so it is best to be safe. You are very unlikely to get HIV because the virus does not live in the air for more than a few minutes.

For additional information visit www.ierha.ca, click on "Care in Your Community", "Public Health", "Sterile Needle Distribution Program".