

Syringe Disposal

Safe, Legal and Free Disposal of Sharps

It is illegal in Seattle to dispose of used needles (sharps), or syringes with needles attached, in your regular garbage can or recycling containers.

Putting needles and sharps into the garbage is a health risk for disposal workers. A loose needle can injure and possibly infect garbage collectors and recycling and disposal station employees.

In fact, the garbage collectors in Seattle will not pick up your garbage or recycling if they find needles and syringes in it.



Do not break off needles (points). Points can carry HIV, hepatitis, and other germs. And please do not flush needles down the toilet. If the point gets broken off, pull the plunger out of the barrel, put the point in the barrel, and then replace the plunger.



Ways to Dispose of Sharps Safely

- ◆ Purchase a sharps container at a **pharmacy**. Ask if you can bring the filled sharps container back and drop it off at the pharmacy.
- ◆ Ask your **doctor** if you can return used sharps to his/her office or clinic. If you can, drop off your container there.
- ◆ Drop off your container at a **Public Health Clinic**. Just ask the receptionist for assistance.
- ◆ Dispose of loose sharps or sharps containers 24 hours a day in a steel, outdoor **syringe drop box**. Containers should be no larger than 2 liters (half-gallon).
- ◆ Drop off your container at a **recycling and disposal station**. There is a limit of 1 one-gallon container per trip.
- ◆ Visit a **Needle Exchange** to get a free sharps container or to drop off or exchange used sharps.

For the **Public Health Clinic, syringe drop box or Needle Exchange** nearest you, call (206) 205-7837(STDS) or 1-800-678-1595.

Recycling and Disposal Stations in Seattle

North 34th St. and Carr Place North (Fremont area)
2nd Ave. South and South Kenyon St.
(South Park area)

8 am - 5:30 pm, 7 days a week
Closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and
New Year's Day.

- ◆ If you live **in Seattle**: Drop off your container of used sharps at a **public recycling and disposal station, Public Health Clinic, syringe drop box** or your local **Needle Exchange**. If you are unable to bring your sharps to a drop/exchange site, ask a friend or relative to take them for you.
- ◆ If you live **outside of Seattle and within King County**: You can put needles and sharps into the garbage if the needles or sharps are placed in a **rigid, plastic container** (such as a plastic milk jug or a plastic soda pop bottle) with a tight fitting lid. Also, place a **biohazard label** on the bottle. Biohazard labels are available at drop off and exchange sites. If you do not have a biohazard label, write on the bottle "SHARPS, DO NOT RECYCLE".



Loose needles or sharps are accepted only at Public Health clinics, syringe drop boxes or Needle Exchange. Needles/sharps to be disposed of at other drop sites must be placed in a manufactured sharps container or a labeled, rigid, plastic container.

It's easy to dispose of your needles and syringes at dropoff or exchange sites...



FIRST: Put used sharps in a rigid, plastic container. A manufactured sharps container is best. If you don't have a manufactured sharps container, use a rigid plastic container such as a plastic milk jug or a plastic soda-pop bottle. Put a biohazard label on the bottle. Labels are available at drop off and exchange sites.

THEN: Bring your full container to the drop off or exchange site. You are responsible for disposing of your sharps in the sharps receptacle at these sites. Your sharps container will not be returned to you. Recycling stations allow only one container per trip. There is no limit at Public Health Clinics and Needle Exchange.



Where to get them...
How to dispose of them...

Syringe Access

Pharmacies may sell or distribute new, sterile syringes to diabetics and injection drug users.

Revisions to WA State law in 2002 allow pharmacies to legally sell or distribute new, sterile syringes to individuals in order to prevent the spread of blood-borne diseases like HIV (the cause of AIDS) and hepatitis C. The revised law also allows individuals over the age of 18 to possess sterile syringes. Syringes may be purchased with or without a prescription at participating pharmacies. Ask your doctor or pharmacist.

To locate a participating King County pharmacy near you, call the HIV/STD Hotline at (206) 205-7837 (STDS) or 1-800-678-1595.

You may also exchange old, used syringes for new, sterile ones at authorized needle exchanges.

While it is legal to purchase and possess syringes, it is still a crime to *possess or use illegal drugs*. Drug possession can result in arrest and criminal prosecution.

Health Risks

Injecting drugs can be unsafe and dangerous to your health. If you inject without always using sterile equipment and methods, you run the risk for getting HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C. Injecting drugs can also lead to serious abscesses, cellulitis, heart infections (endocarditis), and death from overdose.

How to Reduce Your Risk

If you do inject, there are ways to be safer and reduce your risk of disease and infection:

- ◆ Use a **brand new, sterile syringe** every time you inject or divide drugs. Even re-using your own syringe can put you at risk for infections.
- ◆ **Never share** syringes, cookers, cottons, water, or water bottles with anybody.
- ◆ **Wash** your hands and the injection site. Use plenty of **hot, soapy water**.
- ◆ Use a new alcohol pad to **clean the injection site**.
- ◆ Use a **clean cooker** and **fresh, clean water** to cook your hit.
- ◆ Use a **brand new cotton** every time you draw up a hit.
- ◆ Do not inject into the same spot over and over again.
- ◆ Do not put the tip of the needle in your mouth before injecting.
- ◆ Go to a medical clinic at the first signs of an infection.

Protecting Yourself and Others

Learn your HIV and hepatitis status.

Get tested. If you are not infected, you can stay that way. If you are infected, you can learn how to take care of yourself and avoid passing HIV and hepatitis on to others. HIV and hepatitis testing can be done anonymously. For times and locations, call (206) 205-7837(STDS) or 1-800-678-1595.

Get vaccinated for hepatitis A and B if you haven't already had the vaccine or the disease. Unfortunately, there is no vaccine for hepatitis C... yet.

Regular drug use can lead to dependence. **Drug treatment** can help you stop using. Call the Alcohol/Drug 24 Hour Helpline at (206) 722-3700 for assistance and more information about drug treatment. Or stop by your local Needle Exchange for treatment information.

Overdose Is a Risk...

But it can be prevented.

- ◆ Most overdoses are caused by mixing drugs. Most heroin users know that drinking too much alcohol or taking too many benzos will cause an overdose. **Know your limits.** Mixing can be fatal.
- ◆ Overdose is more likely when you start using again after a break – like after you get out of jail, a hospital or a treatment program. If you've been off for a while, you can't tolerate the same amount as you did before. If you use again, **start with a smaller amount.**
- ◆ **Don't use alone.** Using alone is very risky. When you fix alone, nobody can help you if you overdose.
- ◆ When someone overdoses, **call 911.** Make sure the airway is clear and keep the person breathing. If necessary, perform rescue breathing (mouth-to-mouth) every 5 seconds until help arrives.

Needle Exchange will trade used syringes for new, sterile ones. Needle Exchange can also help you find medical care, drug treatment, and testing for HIV and hepatitis.

Needle Exchange is open 7 days a week in King County.

For the location nearest you, call the HIV/STD Hotline at (206) 205-7837(STDS) or 1-800-678-1595.

Drug Treatment & Support:

Alcohol/Drug 24 Hour Helpline..... (206) 722-3700
Crisis Clinic..... (206) 461-3222
Community Info Line..... (206) 461-3200

Abscess & Wound Care:

Needle Exchange Medical Clinic..... (206) 205-7837
Pioneer Square Clinic..... (206) 521-1750

Emergency Care:

Harborview Medical Center
Emergency..... (206) 731-3074
Urgent Care (non-emergency)..... (206) 731-5867
Providence Seattle Medical Center
Emergency..... (206) 320-2111
Evergreen Hospital Medical Center
Emergency..... (425) 899-1700
Overlake Hospital Medical Center
Emergency..... (425) 688-5200
Valley Medical Center
Emergency..... (425) 251-5185
University of WA Medical Center..... (206) 598-4000

HIV & STD Info & Testing:

HIV/STD Hotline..... (206) 205-7837(STDS)
1-800-678-1595
TTY (206) 296-4843

Needles/Sharps Disposal:

Needle Exchange..... (206) 205-7837
Seattle Public Utilities..... (206) 684-7600

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