

# Safe retrieval and disposal of needles and syringes

## If you get a needle stick injury

If you get pricked by a discarded needle and syringe (often referred to as 'needle stick injury') the following steps should be taken:



- Flush the injured area with flowing water.
- Wash the wound well with soap and warm water.

- Dry the wound and apply a waterproof dressing.



- Seek medical attention for an assessment of the risk of infection and appropriate treatment.
- If the needle and syringe cannot be retrieved, mark the area so others are not at risk and contact the Disposal Helpline.

## MORE INFORMATION

If you need more information or support, call the:

**DISPOSAL HELPLINE**  
**1800 552 355**  
**24 hours a day seven days a week**

If you would like to receive this publication in an accessible format, please phone 1300 365 482, using the National Relay Service (TTY) 13 36 77 if required, or email [nsp.orders@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:nsp.orders@dhs.vic.gov.au). This document is also available in pdf format on the Internet at [www.health.vic.gov.au/drugservices/pubs/index.htm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/drugservices/pubs/index.htm)

Authorised by Victorian Government  
50 Lonsdale Street  
Melbourne



# The risk of contracting HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) or other blood-borne viruses by injuring yourself with a needle and syringe is very low.

## If you find a discarded needle and syringe

The following steps will help you to safely retrieve and dispose of inappropriately discarded needles and syringes:

- Assess if the needle and syringe is in a place where it can be easily removed.
- If you do not want to dispose of the needle and syringe yourself or if it is in an awkward place to reach, contact the Disposal Helpline for more information or to arrange for it to be removed.

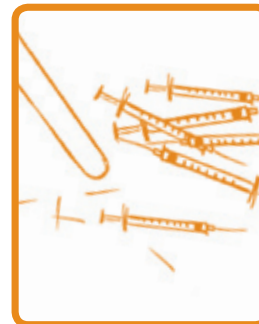


If you decide to remove the needle and syringe yourself, make sure you:

- Wear latex or plastic gloves for protection. Thick gloves, such as gardening gloves, make it difficult to pick up the needle and syringe.
- Take an approved disposal container and lid to the site. These containers are available from all Needle and Syringe Programs and most local councils. If you do not have one, use a hard plastic container such as an empty detergent bottle. **Do not** use glass bottles as these can break.

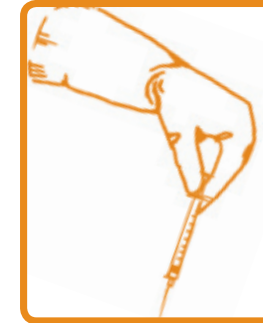


- If the needle and syringe is difficult to reach, carefully remove rubbish or other material around it so that you have direct access to it.
- If there is more than one needle and syringe, separate them using a stick or the end of a broom. **Do this carefully.** Each needle and syringe can then be picked up individually.

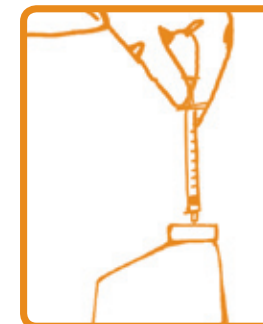


- Pick up the needle and syringe by the barrel (plastic end). **Do not** pick it up by the needle end. Make sure the needle is pointing away from you.

- **Never** recap a needle and syringe, even if the cap has also been discarded.



- Place the needle and syringe, needle end first, into the container. The container should be on a stable surface and not held by hand.



- Secure the lid on the container.

- Take off the gloves and put them in a plastic bag. Tie a knot at the end of the bag and place it in a rubbish bin.
- Wash your hands with soap and water.



- To dispose of the container, take it to your local Needle and Syringe Program or council office or contact the Disposal Helpline (1800 552 355) for further advice.

- **Do not** dispose of needles and syringes in rubbish bins, drains or toilets.

- **Do not** deposit in recycle or sanitary bins.

DISPOSAL HELPLINE

1800 552 355

24 hours a day seven days a week