

Safe retrieval and disposal of needles and syringes

13

Safe disposal

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 or 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 Help-line for more information or to arrange for it to be removed.
- You can call the 24-hour Disposal Help Line on 1800 552 355 seven days a week.

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

- Wear latex or plastic gloves for protection. Thick gloves, like 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 by using a stick, or broom-end. Do this carefully. Each needle and

syringe can then be picked up individually.

- Pick up the needle and syringe by the barrel (plastic end). Make sure the needle is pointing away from you.
- Never recap a needle and syringe, even if the cap is also discarded.
- Place the needle and syringe, needle end first, into the container, which 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 soapy water.
- To dispose of the container take it to your local Needle and Syringe Program, local council office or contact the Disposal Help-Line (1800 552 355) for further advice. Do not dispose of needles and syringes in rubbish, recycle or sanitary bins, drains or toilets.

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 well with soap and warm water.
- Dry and apply a waterproof dressing.
- Seek medical attention for an assessment of the risk of infection and appropriate treatment.
- If the needle and syringe can not be retrieved, mark the area so others are not at risk and contact the Disposal Help-line.

For further information and support The Disposal Help-line

T 1800 552 355

This section taken from Department of Human Services leaflet 'Safe Retrieval & Disposal of Syringes & Needles'.