

# SAFE NEEDLE DISPOSAL INFORMATION GUIDE

A clean and safe Edmonton is a shared responsibility



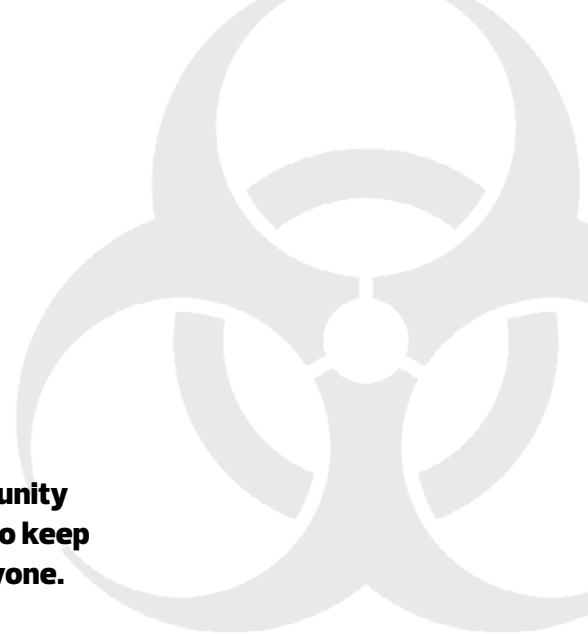
Edmonton

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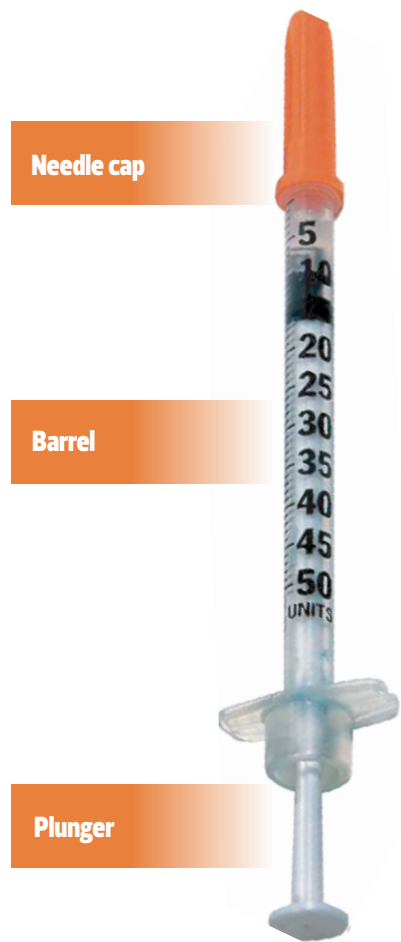
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**The City of Edmonton Capital City Cleanup program, community organizations, public agencies and citizens work together to keep our streets, parks and playgrounds clean and safe for everyone.**



We do this by raising awareness about needle safety, reducing the number of discarded needles, minimizing the risk of injury and providing options for safe needle disposal.

People use needles for many reasons. Needles can be used for medical reasons or substance use. Regardless of the reason, it's important to provide easily accessible **options for safe needle handling and disposal.**

Needles are sometimes called sharps. Needles used for medical reasons or substance use look the same as needles you see in a doctor's office.

## I see a needle(s). What do I do?

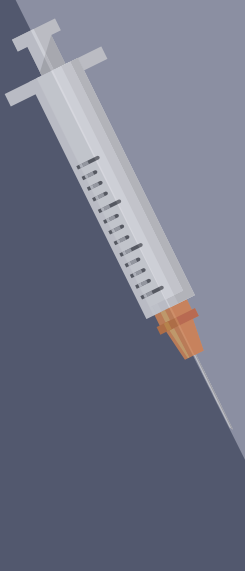
### On public property

Call 311 or you can report a needle by using the 311 App. If the needle is on public property, the City will arrange for pick up and disposal.

### On private property

The City does not collect needles on private property. If the needle is on private property, there are steps you can take to help you safely handle and dispose of the needle(s).

# Have a needle on private property?



To help you safely handle and dispose of needles, follow these **three steps:**

- 1** Pick up needle, pointing away from your body, with **tongs or thick gloves**
- 2** Place needle in a metal or hard plastic, sealed container and **label it 'used needles'**
- 3** **Wash hands** with soap and warm water



## Where can I dispose of my needle (s)?

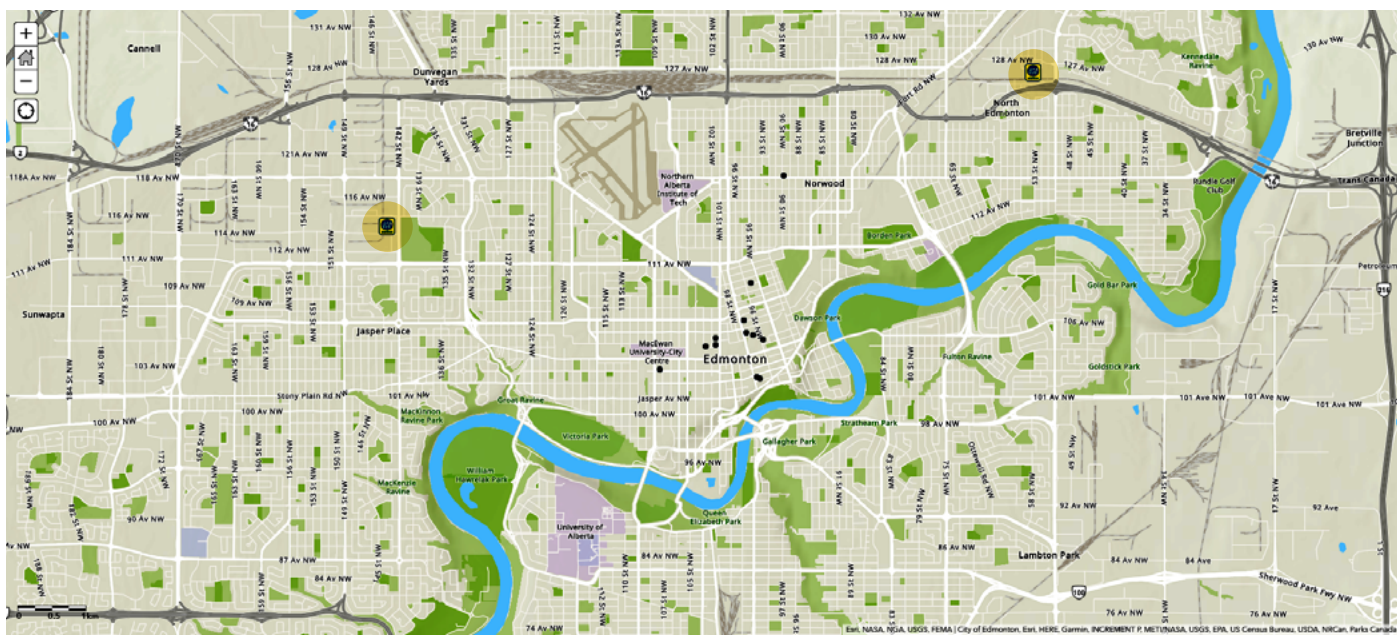
- Safe needle disposal boxes are located across the City.
- All Eco stations accept needles from households only.

The City of Edmonton tracks and responds to needle-related issues from calls to 311. We focus on cleaning and maintaining the needle boxes, using 311 data to guide decisions on the number

and placement of needle boxes and responding to individual citizen calls.

Edmonton Police Service supports the needle disposal boxes as one way to make communities safer.

Visit our online interactive map at [edmonton.ca/needlesmap](http://edmonton.ca/needlesmap) for locations of needle boxes and ECO stations.



## If you are not comfortable picking up the needle(s)...

If you are not comfortable picking up the needle(s) on private property, you may wish to call a private biomedical waste disposal company nearest you for needle disposal if:

- You are too nervous to pick up the needle.
- You see many needles in a pile, for example, in a stairwell or behind a dumpster.
- You see broken needles and needle debris scattered on the ground.
- You have no way of storing the needle(s) in a secure container for safe disposal.

**Streetworks** provides a free needle exchange service for injection drug users with 15 sites and a mobile van that goes out seven nights a week. People who inject drugs can exchange their needles for a new ones at their many locations open during the day. Over 2.2 million needles are exchanged through Streetworks each year. For more information and locations, visit [streetworks.ca](http://streetworks.ca)

Disposed needles from Streetworks and the needle disposal boxes are collected by a biohazard company and incinerated.





## UNSAFE WAYS TO DISPOSE OF NEEDLES



### **PUTTING NEEDLES IN THE GARBAGE OR RECYCLE BAG**

Waste collectors can get poked if needles are not properly secured or loose in bags



### **PUTTING NEEDLES DOWN THE TOILET**

The needles go into the sewer system and into the river



### **DROPPING NEEDLES ON THE GROUND, IN A BUSH OR POT USED FOR PLANTS AND FLOWERS**

An adult, child, pet or maintenance worker could get scratched or poked

## Discarded needles can be a public safety issue.

Needle debris is a challenging issue for Edmonton, but we are not alone. Cities across the globe are tackling this issue with strategies to ensure individuals and communities are as safe and healthy as possible.

Safe needle disposal reduces the chance of injury to others. The majority of needles in communities are disposed of safely by the people who have used them. However, there is still work to be done to respond to community needle debris.

Many people worry about getting a disease like hepatitis or HIV from an accidental needle stick. The risk of contracting disease is extremely

low. Most of the time, the person who used the needle doesn't have hepatitis, HIV, or other infections that can be spread that way.

When the person does have an infection that can be spread, your risk level if you are accidentally stuck by the needle depends on:

- How much infected blood you are exposed to.
- How much virus is in the blood.
- Some people with viral infections have more of the virus in their blood than others do.
- The condition the needle is found in, including the length of time it has been exposed to the air and environment since use.





## What do I do if I get poked by a needle?

- Allow the wound to bleed freely.
- Wash the wound right away with soap and warm water or an alcohol based hand sanitizer.
- Call **Health Link at 811** for 24/7 health advice and to discuss what to do next.

**For more information** about needle safety and how to protect yourself, visit Alberta Health Service's website: [myhealth.alberta.ca/needlesafety](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/needlesafety)



## There are misconceptions about needles and the people who use them.

<h3>MYTH</h3>	<h3>FACT</h3>
<p>☒ People who inject drugs are irresponsible and don't care about needles on the street.</p>	<p>✓ <b>The majority of people who inject drugs dispose of their needles responsibly and safely.</b></p>
<p>☒ Every needle on the street is there because of people who inject drugs.</p>	<p>✓ <b>People use needles for a variety of reasons. Needles may be used by people with addictions but they are also used by people with specific health conditions.</b></p>
<p>☒ All homeless people inject/use substances and all people who inject/use substances are homeless.</p>	<p>✓ <b>People who inject/use substances can come from every part of our society. Substance use does not depend on how much money someone makes or where they live.</b></p>
<p>☒ I will get HIV and hepatitis if I am poked by a needle.</p>	<p>✓ <b>The risk of contracting a disease from an accidental needle stick is very low. Most viruses become inactive soon after being exposed to air.</b></p> <p>✓ <b>If done properly, discarded needles can be picked up and disposed of safely with minimal risk.</b></p>

If you have any further questions or for more information, visit: [edmonton.ca/capitalcitycleanup](https://edmonton.ca/capitalcitycleanup)  
email: [capitalcitycleanup@edmonton.ca](mailto:capitalcitycleanup@edmonton.ca)

### CITY OF EDMONTON PARTNERS

- Alberta Health Services
- Edmonton Police Service
- REACH Edmonton Council
- Streetworks
- 211 – 24 hour information and referral