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 longer 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.

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 off or 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 or exchange sites. If you do not have a biohazard label, write on the bottle “SHARPS, DO NOT RECYCLE.”

For the Public Health Clinic, syringe drop box or Needle Exchange nearest you, call (206) 205-7837 (STDs) or 1-800-687-1595.

Recycling and Disposal Stations in Seattle

North 34th St. and Carr Place North (Fremont area)
2nd Ave. South and South Komyon St. (South Park area)
8 am - 5:30 pm, 7 days a week
Closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year’s Day.

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. Place a biohazard label on the bottle.

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.
Health Risks
Injecting drugs can be unsafe and dangerous to your health. If you inject without always using sterile equipment andmethods, 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 new, sterile syringe every time you inject or divide drugs. Reusing 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 healthy. 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.

Make sure you 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.

Drug treatment can help you stop using. Call the Alcohol/Drug 24 Hour Helpline at (206) 205-7837(STDS) or 1-800-678-1595.

Overdose Is a Risk...

But it can be prevented.
- Most overdoses are caused by mixing drugs. Most heroin users believe that taking 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 or divide drugs, you are more likely to use too much.
- When someone overdoses, call 911. Make sure the airway is clear and the person is breathing. If necessary, perform rescue breathing (mouth-to-mouth) every 5 seconds until help arrives.

Available in alternative formats

Drug Treatment & Support:
- Alcohol/Drug 24 Hour Hotline: (206) 722-3700
- Crisis Clinic: (206) 461-3222
- Community Info Line: (206) 461-3200
- Abcess & Wound Care: Needle Exchange Medical Clinic: (206) 521-1750

Emergency Care:
- Harborview Medical Center: (206) 598-4000
- Valley Medical Center: (206) 722-3700
- University of WA Medical Center: (206) 598-4000
- Providence St. Joseph’s Medical Center: (206) 461-3200
- Evergreen Hospital Medical Center: (206) 461-3200
- Urgent care: (206) 722-3700
- Overlake Medical Center: (206) 468-5200
- UW Medical Center: (206) 598-4000
- University of WA Medical Center: (206) 598-4000

HIV & STD Info & Testing:
- HIV/STD Hotline: (206) 205-7837(STDS) or 1-800-678-1595
- Needle Exchange: (206) 296-4843