

Harris House Health Clinic (HHHC)
Central Vancouver Island Harm Reduction Services
375 Franklyn Street
Nanaimo, BC Ph. 250-753-6759

**INFORMATION ON HEALTH RISKS FROM CONTACT WITH DISCARDED
SYRINGES, GLASS STEMS AND CONDOMS
AND DISPOSAL GUIDELINES**

Finding used syringes, glass stems (stems) and condoms in the street, a park or on a school ground can be upsetting. The sight of these objects gives people thoughts of disease and danger. While sharps and condoms can pose a public health hazard with regard to Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and HIV (the virus that causes AIDS), with safe practices, risk of infection can be avoided. Generally, sharps, stems or condoms pose a higher risk for contracting bacterial infections. While the risk of contracting infection is small, these items still should be handled carefully.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND A DISCARDED NEEDLE, STEM OR CONDOM

Children should:

Leave these on the ground and immediately ask an adult to remove them.

Adults should:

Teach children to leave these items on the ground and ask an adult to help. Pick up these items, preferably with a pair of tongs or disposable gloves.

- In the case of condoms, remove the item and place it in a plastic bag and dispose in the garbage;
- In the case of a needle or stem, place the syringe in a puncture-proof container, such as a hard plastic or metal container with a lid or container that does not allow the needle or stem to poke through;
- After handling discarded condoms, stems or syringes, always wash hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- In the event you come into contact with blood or body fluids, wash with warm soapy water for 30 seconds to disinfect the contacted area. Clean spill areas using an absorbent material the area with disinfectant and place in a plastic bag and dispose.
- In the event you are poked by a syringe or broken stem, wash the area with warm soapy water. Do not squeeze the wound or soak it in bleach. Go to the nearest emergency department for immediate care.

When a discarded syringe or stem has been found, take the disposal container to either the HHHC or deposit the syringe/stem immediately into its sealed puncture proof container and throw the container into the trash. Coffee tins, hard plastic soap containers can be used for disposing the discarded needle into regular garbage.

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Remember, although the risk of infection from used syringes, stems and condoms is very low, you can help limit risk by removing the item from your property. Please teach your children about taking necessary precautions.

*For further information contact Harris House Health Clinic at **753-6759***

OR Visit HealthLink BC, Health Files

<http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/servicesresources/healthlinkbcfiles/>