

# RECOVERY OF USED SYRINGES

Each year, community groups, pharmacies and services in the health network give out a million syringes to prevent the spread of blood-borne infections. Most of those syringes are recovered appropriately since they are disposed of in containers used for this purpose. However, a small percentage of syringes are left in public spaces (yards, parking lots, staircases, bathrooms, etc.).

In this context, **Montréal's regional public health department** is making information available for the public :

- How to collect and handle used syringes
- How to dispose of them
- What must absolutely be avoided
- What to do in case of an accidental needlestick injury

**Note:** The information on this site does not replace the advice of a health professional. If you have questions about your health, talk to a professional.

## How to dispose of used syringes safely

**Make sure you prepare the items needed**



- A pair of gloves (e.g., rubber, gardening or dishwashing gloves).
- Metal tongs (e.g., barbecue)
- A biomedical waste container or, if not available, a puncture-resistant container with a hard lid (e.g., peanut butter jar).

## How to handle a used syringe

**Have all the necessary items ready before you start**

1. Put on the gloves and take the tongs.
2. Place the container near the syringe.
3. Using the tongs, pick up the syringe by the plastic end.

**Important: Do not try to put the cap back on the needle.**

4. Again using the tongs, put the used syringe in the puncture-resistant container.
5. Close the container tightly with the hard lid.
6. Lastly, bring the container to a used syringe disposal service at a CLSC or the nearest pharmacy. You can also consult the **interactive map** of outdoor bins for used syringes.

## What must absolutely be avoided

- Put a used syringe in the garbage: risk of needlestick injury to garbage collectors.
- Put a used syringe in a recycling bin: risk of needlestick injury when sorting recyclables.
- Put a used syringe in the toilet or down the drain: risk of blockage; harmful to the environment.
- Put a used syringe in places where it is hard to see: risk of needlestick injury.



### *Picking up a used syringe in a public place (alleyways, parks, etc.)*

If you're uncomfortable picking it up or don't have the items needed to do so: call Accès Montréal at 3-1-1.

## What to do in case of an accidental needlestick injury

Used syringes left behind can result in accidental needlestick injuries. Although in this context the risk of contracting a bloodborne infection, such as hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV) or HIV, is generally low, **it is important to act quickly.**



- Clean the wound with soap and water without making the wound bleed. Don't use alcohol or another disinfectant to clean the wound.
- See a health professional as soon as possible (within a few hours of the incident) to have the risk evaluated and get personalized care that could include the following:
  - Administration of immunoglobulin and the HBV vaccine for people who are not protected.
  - Blood tests for follow-up, especially for HCV and HIV.
  - HIV prophylaxis, based on level of risk.

**Call 811 (Info-santé)** for more information and to find the most appropriate resource nearest you.

**Two references to help you:**

18 years and over: [CHUM](#): 1001 rue Sanguinet, Montréal

Under 18 years old: [CHU Sainte-Justine](#): 3175 ch. de la Côte-Sainte-Catherine, Montréal

**Interactive map of outdoor used needle collection bins**

If you do not have access to a designated used needle collection site, you can refer to this interactive map of outdoor used needle collection bins.