

Safely Pick Up Litter



If you are participating in a community cleanup, follow Public Health guidelines and be prepared to safely respond to possible hazards like broken glass, needles, nails or other sharp objects. Keep yourself and others safe by reviewing this information before you begin.

Before you start, consider:

- Collecting in groups of two or more
- Wearing a safety vest or bright colours so others can easily find you in an emergency
- Wearing weather-appropriate clothing, including sun protection, layers, and closed-toed shoes
- Take water in a refillable bottle to stay hydrated

Prepare your supplies:

- Garbage bags and/or bins for common litter
- Poke proof containers (e.g., hard plastic or metal with a lid) for hazardous litter
- Gloves, reflective vest
- Tongs, garbage pickers
- First aid kit; hand sanitizer
- Shovels, rakes, brooms (optional)

Words are impactful.

“Reduce stigma by changing the words you use to talk about drug use. Start with “people who use drugs” rather than addicts, junkies, users, etc.”

- Health Canada,
Stigma: Why Words Matter

A limited supply of gloves, tongs, and poke proof containers are available through Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit. Learn more and watch our [video](#) about safe sharps disposal on our website.

Let's Get to the Point: Safe Clean-Up Instructions

Before heading out on your cleanup, make sure everyone knows how to safely collect common litter (e.g., food wrappers, masks, plastic cups, straws, bags, etc.) as well as more hazardous litter (e.g., condoms, razor blades, needles, broken glass, or other sharp objects). Plan ahead, be prepared, and teach children NOT to touch sharps and tell an adult if they find one. Use our information sheet [Talking to Kids about Needles](#) to guide your conversation.

Instructions for collecting common litter:

1. Before collecting, put on the appropriate personal protective equipment.
2. If possible, use tongs or pick-up sticks to avoid direct contact with litter.
3. Collect debris into the appropriate bag or other container.
4. Take all necessary precautions, including being cautious near riverbanks or roads, having adults handle dangerous items, and supervising children closely.
5. Remember to wash or sanitize your hands frequently and when you are finished.
6. Make sure bags and bins are properly closed, and take to a local garbage disposal location.

Instructions for collecting more hazardous litter:

1. Put on gloves.
2. Place your poke proof container on a stable surface beside the hazardous litter (use any thick plastic, or metal container with a lid).
3. Use tongs to carefully collect the hazardous litter. Keep sharp points/edges pointed away from you and never attempt to recap a used needle.
4. Place the item(s) into the container pointy end first and close the lid.
5. Remove gloves and wash hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer.
6. Take the container to a local disposal location, as listed on our website at hnhu.org/sharps-needles

Questions?

Reach out to Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit.



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