



# Talking to Children About Needles

Children are curious. Teach them what to do if they find a needle or sharp object in the community – BEFORE they find one. How you teach your child will depend on their age and your own comfort level. It is important to answer questions if you can. This may be a great opportunity to give your child valuable information for their safety and give them some understanding about an issue people may face in the community around them.

## Teaching your kids about needle safety:

Show your child a picture of a syringe so they know what a needle looks like in case they find one.

### If they find a needle, tell them:

- Do not touch it. Needles can be sharp and may hurt you and they can have germs on them.
- If you are playing with friends, tell them not to touch it while you get an adult.
- Tell an adult you trust about the needle. It's the adult's job to make sure the needle is thrown away properly.

## When a child asks:

### Why are there needles on the ground?

For young children, keep it simple:

“People throw things away incorrectly all the time. People throw their wrappers on the ground and coffee cups too.”

### Additional Information:

- Waiting until your child has a first exposure to a needle might be too late. Have a conversation with children as young as five about the possibility of finding a needle in a public area. We’ve provided some child friendly language options below.
- Needles are used to put a medicine or a drug inside a person’s body. When a needle has been used, it will have the person’s germs on it. Because needles are sharp, they might cut/poke you if you touch them which would hurt and would expose you to their germs.
- People who have left a needle behind likely did not leave it there to hurt anyone. Sometimes things are dropped by accident, and sometimes people do not know where to put them. We know it isn’t safe to leave needles on the ground, so it is important to know [how to clean them up and how to throw them away](#).
- This is also a great time to use language that destigmatizes substance use. Reference Health Canada’s [Stigma: Why Words Matter](#) guide to learn more about stigma and how we can avoid creating barriers to care for members of our community.



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