

Drugs in the Community & Safe Needle Exchange

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Population: (at-risk adults / IV drug users / urban community)



Drug use is a major public health issue.

- Drug use doesn't just affect one type of person; it affects people in all communities.
- When drugs are injected, it increases the risk of serious health problems like infections and overdose.
- Today, we're not here to judge. We're here to talk about how to stay safer and reduce harm.

Some most injectable drugs we see in the Community

- Heroin
- Fentanyl
- Meth



Who Is Affected by Injection Drug Use?

Affects ALL communities

- Higher impact in:
 - Low-income communities
 - Areas with limited healthcare access
 - Rural & urban communities

But this can happen anywhere, in cities, small towns, and even in our own neighborhoods.

Impacts:

- Moms & dads
- Sons & daughters
- Friends & neighbors
- Entire families
- Communities

Addiction and unsafe needle use don't just impact the user; they can impact families, their support systems, and communities.



Injection drug use increases risk for:

- Skin infections (abscesses)
- HIV
- Hepatitis B & C
- Blood infections (sepsis)
- Heart infection (endocarditis)
- Overdose
- Death

When drugs are injected, it increases the risk of serious infections and can even lead to death.



Skin Infections from Needle Use

- Abscess (pus-filled lump)
- Redness, swelling, warmth
- Pain at injection site
- Open sores or drainage

⚠ Caused by:

- **Dirty needles/sharing needles**
- **Reusing needles**
- **Not cleaning the skin**

Bacteria from another person or the environment can be pushed under the skin, leading to painful infections such as abscesses or sepsis.



“It looks clean, so it’s safe.”

“I wiped it off, I’m fine.”

“We’re family / I trust them.”

“They don’t have anything.”

When a needle is used:

- It picks up **bacteria from the skin or blood**

When that same needle is shared or reused:

- Those bacteria get pushed **under the skin**
 - **This can cause infections at the injection site or transmit blood infections, such as:**
 - HIV,
 - Hepatitis B and C
- It can also cause infections in the heart, called endocarditis, which can also be life-threatening.

Many of these risks are preventable just by using clean needles.



How Do We Prevent This?

- Use a **new needle every time**
- Never share needles
- Clean the area
- **Use needle exchange programs**
- Dispose of needles safely



So now that we know the risks, the question is, how do we prevent this?

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- Using a brand-new, clean needle every single time.
 - Never share needles, even with someone you trust.
 - Needle exchange programs are there so you always have access to clean supplies.
 - **And disposing of needles safely protects not just you, but everyone in the community.**



But I Threw It in the Trash...

- Trash does NOT make it safe-it puts someone else at risk!!
- Needles can **poke through bags**
- Can injure:
 - Trash workers
 - Family members
 - Children & pets
- ✓ Use a **sharps container**

If a sharps container isn't available, use a hard plastic container with a lid, like a thick bottle, until it can be disposed of properly.



A close-up, high-angle shot of a large, chaotic pile of discarded medical syringes. The syringes are mostly white plastic with orange or red caps and plungers. Some have black markings on the barrels. They are scattered in all directions, creating a textured, busy background. A semi-transparent dark grey banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text.

What is a Needle Exchange Program?

Needle Exchange Program (NEPs)

- A needle exchange program is a place where people can get **clean needles** and **safely dispose** of used ones.
- The goal is to prevent infections like HIV and hepatitis by making sure people don't have to reuse or share needles.
- These programs also connect people to healthcare, testing, and support if they want it.
- They are here to help keep people safe, not to judge
- These programs are confidential and focused on support, not punishment



How to Find a Needle Exchange Program

- Local health department
- Community outreach programs
- Online search: “needle exchange near me”
- Call 211 (local resource line)
 - You will be connected to a local operator, and they can help you find services like:
 - Needle exchange programs
 - Food assistance
 - Housing help
 - Mental health services



**NEEDLE EXCHANGE
SAVES LIVES**

Small steps toward staying safe are important!

- Addiction is a health condition
- Everyone deserves respect & care
- You are not alone
- Help is available when you're ready

No

Judgment

