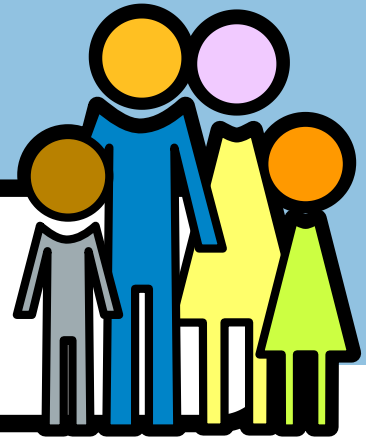




Interior Health  
Every person matters

## Talking to children about needles



***It is important to teach children what to do if they find improperly discarded needles.***

Children may find used needles at home or in a public place.

Needle stick injuries can happen when a needle from a syringe accidentally pokes or cuts the skin. Because of this, it is important that needles are disposed of promptly and safely.

Needles should always be disposed of at home in a secure sharps container that is kept out of children's reach and returned to the pharmacy or health centre for proper disposal.

To prevent needle stick injuries, it is also very important to teach children to never touch a needle and to tell a trusted adult if they find one.

Here are some things you can say when talking to children about needle safety:

**DO NOT TOUCH IT.** Needles can be sharp and may hurt you. They can also carry germs.

**TELL AN ADULT** you trust about the needle. If you are playing with friends, ask one of them to make sure no one touches the needle while you get an adult.



# Talking to kids about the WHY

***Because children are curious, you can expect they will have questions that may be difficult to answer. Adults may not be comfortable talking to children about things like drug use and, depending on their age, the child may not be at a stage where they are able to understand complicated subjects. Below are some suggested responses to help you navigate the WHY questions they may have.***

## ***Why are there needles on the ground?***

*For young children, keep it simple:* “Someone was using that to put something inside their body. It is not safe to leave it out like that because it can hurt someone.”

*Older children may require more information:* “People use needles for a variety of reasons. Some people use needles to put medicine or other drugs inside their bodies. Some medical conditions require people to use needles; others may use needles for medicine to manage pain. People also use needles to inject illegal drugs / to take a substance that makes them feel different. It’s not safe to leave needles out like that because someone could get hurt.”

“Some drugs can make people feel sick when they stop using – and that makes it hard to think about other important things. People who use needles don’t leave them out to hurt other people; they are just trying to survive, the only way they think they can – and that is a terrible way to have to live.”

## ***Some older children may have more WHY questions, such as why do people use illegal drugs / become addicted to drugs?***

“Some people like the way the drugs make them feel. Other people don’t. Some people who use drugs don’t do them all the time but some people can’t stop doing them – that is called addiction. We don’t know for sure why some people struggle with addiction – maybe their brains don’t make the right chemicals in the right amounts, so even though it’s not good for their bodies, drugs make them feel better, at least for a short time. Or maybe they had a really difficult life – a lot of pain, or an accident or bad trauma, or they were hurt or abused by someone in their family, so they never ever felt safe or OK, and maybe the drugs helped make them forget about that for a little while.”

“It is important to know that illegal drugs can be harmful and that it is not safe to do them. Because they are illegal, you have no idea if you’re really getting what you think you are – some drugs can be mixed with even more dangerous things. If you are feeling sad, hurt or unsafe, it is very important that you talk to an adult that you trust.”