

Talking to children about needles

It is important to teach children what to do if they find improperly discarded needles, whether at home or in a public place:

- Needle stick injuries can happen when a needle from a syringe accidentally pokes or cuts the skin, so prompt and safe disposal is essential.
- 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 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

Children are naturally curious and may ask questions that can be hard to answer. Adults may feel uncomfortable discussing topics like drug use and a child's age may affect how much they can understand.

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 different reasons, including medicine, to manage pain or sometimes illegal drugs. Leaving needles out is unsafe because someone could get hurt.

“Some drugs can make people very sick when they stop using them, which makes daily life hard. People who use needles usually don't mean to hurt anyone—they are just trying to survive in a very difficult situation.”

Why do people use or 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. It might be that their brains don't make certain chemicals in the right balance or because of hard things that happened in their life, like trauma or not feeling safe. For some people, drugs made them feel better or helped them forget for a little while.”

“It is important to know that illegal drugs can be harmful and unsafe. Because they are illegal, you never really know what's in them – 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.”