

INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

A Needle and Syringe Program (NSP or the exchange) worker can give you information, help you find services and make appointments for you.

DirectLine

1800 888 236 • www.directline.org.au
24-hour. If you want to talk to someone about your drug use or find a support service.

Department of Health Needle and Syringe Program information

To find a Needle and Syringe Program near you, search 'needle syringe program'.

Understand Ice

www.understandice.org.au

Agency details:

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USING 01

NSP

A Needle and Syringe Program (NSP, or the exchange), is a confidential service for anyone who injects.

NSPs help prevent blood-borne viruses like hepatitis C and HIV. People who inject can get a range of the equipment they need, and other support, including referrals, for free at the NSP.

NSPs provide:

- Sterile needles and syringes
- Alcohol swabs
- Sexual health products, like condoms and lube
- Sharps disposal containers
- Some NSPs provide additional equipment like wheel filters or sterile water, but there may be a cost
- Health and welfare information
- Referrals to other services.

Using new, sterile equipment each time you inject will reduce the risk of getting hepatitis C and other infections, and help keep your veins healthy.

In Victorian NSPs you do not have to give back a used syringe to get a new one. However, you are encouraged to return used injecting equipment. When you dispose of your equipment properly, it keeps everyone safe and helps the program. Do the right thing! Syringe litter is bad news for everyone.

All NSPs in Victoria display this logo.



Cover: stock photo
posed by model

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CONFIDENTIALITY

An NSP is an anonymous and confidential service.

This means that the information you give cannot be linked to you, and the NSP worker cannot give your personal information to anyone without your consent.

Most NSPs are in places like local community health services, pharmacies, hospital emergency or urgent care wards. It can be difficult to go to these places without seeing someone you know, especially in a small town.

If you don't want to go into the NSP every day, stock up with equipment so you don't have to. There is no limit to the amount of injecting equipment you can get at an NSP.

REFERRALS AND SUPPORT

NSPs can help you with a lot more than just new fits including:

- + Information on hep C, testing and treatment
- + Finding out where you can get naloxone: medicine that temporarily reverses opioid overdose
- + Finding out where you can get drug treatment services
- + Finding out where to get on a methadone or Suboxone® program
- + Finding a doctor or a support service.

There is more information on these and other topics throughout this brochure series.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

When you go to an NSP, both you and the workers share the right to be treated with respect.

You can't be refused a service because of things like your age, or if you are pregnant or have children.

VICTORIA POLICE SUPPORTS THE NSP

Occasionally officers will have to attend an NSP due to other police business, like pursuing people who have committed serious crimes.

It is not an offence to possess needles or syringes. However, if you have committed an offence, Police may seize this equipment and/or charge you.

To find an NSP in your area call DirectLine on 1800 888 236 (free call) or internet search 'needle syringe program'.

COMPLAINTS

If you want to complain about something, the NSP will have a way for you to do so. You can also complain to the Health Complaints Commissioner on 1300 582 113. If you think that police have interfered with your right to access an NSP, please inform the NSP workers on duty, who will follow your concern up with local police command.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF NSP

A Primary NSP has workers who have knowledge of the health issues around injecting and can give you advice on reducing injecting-related risks.

They have a wide range of needles and syringes available and may also have a range of other injecting equipment like water, tourniquets, butterflies and pill filters which may sometimes involve a small cost.

A Secondary NSP is one where the NSP is not its specialty business, like at a community health service, a pharmacy or a hospital. They don't always have a wide range of equipment but can order particular items for you.

Secure Dispensing Units (SDUs), also known as Syringe Vending Machines, supply sterile injecting equipment. Usually, SDUs dispense packs containing sterile injecting equipment and a small disposal container. SDUs may also dispense safe sex products like condoms and lube.

Outreach NSPs are mobile services that operate in some areas. They usually work in the evening time.

Pharmacies often provide injecting equipment but some may charge a small fee. You can return needles and syringes to many pharmacies.

DISPOSAL

It's important to dispose of all injecting equipment safely, using sharps disposal containers provided free of charge. You can dispose of used syringes at:

- Any NSP
- Local councils
- Many public toilets
- Some pharmacies if they are registered as NSPs.

Needles, syringes and swabs should not go into a rubbish bin and especially not a recycling bin, as the recycling plant workers handle the litter collected in the bins.

Please remember to also dispose of wrappers responsibly. You can put these in a rubbish bin.

If in doubt, call the Disposal Helpline on 1800 552 355.