

Clinical Tips: Needle and Syringe Programs for Young People who Inject Drugs

People who inject drugs are at increased risk of blood-borne infections such as HIV and hepatitis C through needle sharing and re-use.

Needle and Syringe Program (NSPs) provide injecting equipment, education and information on reducing drug use and referral to drug treatment, medical care, legal and social services. Staff can also provide condoms and safe sex education.

Equipment supplied at NSPs include needles and syringes, swabs, vials of sterile water and 'sharps bins' for the safe disposal of used injecting equipment. NSPs are also an important point for collection of used injecting equipment and provide support services to families of people who inject drugs. They do not supply drugs or allow people to inject drugs on the premises.

Australia's NSP is a valuable, cost effective harm reduction service.

NSPs have:

- contributed to an overall HIV prevalence rate of less than 1% amongst people who inject drugs (PWID)
- reduced rates of syringe sharing from 70-90% to around 17%.

However, NSPs have not dramatically reduced the prevalence of hepatitis C (HCV), which remains steady at around 50-70% of PWID.

References

¹ Dolan, K., Dillon, P. & Silins, E. 2005. Needle and syringe programs: Your questions answered. Canberra, Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.
[http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/73934F5307F88EC7CA257BF0001E009F/\\$File/ques.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/73934F5307F88EC7CA257BF0001E009F/$File/ques.pdf)

² Centre for research Excellence Into Injecting Drug Use (CREIDU)
http://creidu.edu.au/policy_briefs_and_submissions/12-syringe-coverage-and-australian-nsp

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