



Delivering a Healthy WA

Needle and Syringe Programs

About Needle and Syringe Programs

The term Needle and Syringe Program (NSP) describes any program where sterile injecting equipment is made available to people who inject drugs.

Both government and non-government agencies run NSP. There are three main types of services:

- pharmacy based NSP
- health service based NSP (hospitals, community health centres and other related health services)
- needle and syringe exchange programs (NSEP).

Distribution in WA

Since the early 1980s, pharmacies throughout WA have ensured sterile injecting equipment availability via the retail of pre-packaged injecting equipment such as the Fitpack®, Fitpack Plus®, Sterafit® and Sharpkitz®. The Pharmaceutical Council of WA holds a collective approval for all pharmacies in the State.

NSEPs are operated by non-government organisations and provide sterile injecting equipment at no cost to the client conditional on the return of used items i.e. “exchanged”. If used items are not returned sterile injecting equipment is available at minimal cost.

As instructed by Operational Circular OP0057/07, emergency departments of regional and rural health services provide after hours access to needles and syringes once the local pharmacy is closed or if there is no local pharmacy.

Benefits of NSP

Countries which were slow to introduce NSP register a much higher rate of HIV infection amongst people who inject drugs than countries which acted promptly at the start of the HIV epidemic.

In Australia, NSP were implemented in 1988 and the rate of HIV infection amongst people who inject drugs has remained low. Of all reported HIV cases, only 4.3 per cent are attributed to injecting drug use alone.

Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Program
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