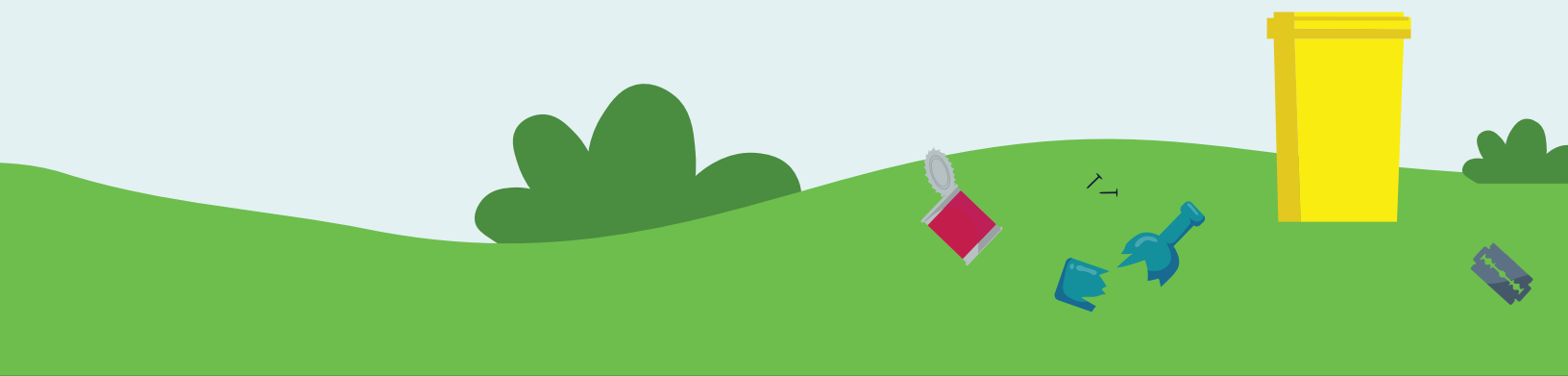


# Let's Get to the Point: Safely Pick Up Litter in Elgin, Oxford and St. Thomas



Learn what to do if you come across hazardous litter like razor blades, needles, or other sharp objects in your community. Litter can carry germs that make you sick, so it's important to be safe!

1. Find a poke-proof container with a lid (e.g., peanut butter container, bottle, coffee can)
2. Use tongs or pliers to pick it up, keeping the sharp part turned away from you
3. Place the item(s) in the container pointy end first and secure the lid
4. Wash your hands with soap and water
5. Take the container to a local sharps disposal location or participating pharmacy by visiting [www.healthsteward.ca](http://www.healthsteward.ca).

Free sharps bins are available at participating pharmacies.

(Limited supply of sharps bins and tongs are available from Southwestern Public Health)

1-800-922-0096

[swpublichealth.ca](http://swpublichealth.ca)

## KEEP SAFETY IN MIND

- Children should NEVER pick up needles! Teach kids to NOT touch sharps and tell an adult
- Wear gloves if you have them
- DO NOT try to recap a needle or break off the sharp end
- Never put a container with sharps into the garbage or recycling bin

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**Public Health**  
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## Safely Pick Up Litter in Oxford, Elgin and St. Thomas

If you are participating in a community cleanup, it is important to follow Public Health guidelines for COVID-19 and be prepared to safely respond to possible hazards like broken glass, needles, nails or other sharp objects. Keep yourself and others safe by reviewing this information before you begin.

### Before you start, consider:

- » Collecting in groups of two or more people (from your own household)
- » Wearing a safety vest or bright-coloured clothing so others can easily find you in an emergency
- » Wearing appropriate clothing for all weather, including sun protection, layers, and closed-toed shoes
- » Bringing water in a refillable bottle to stay hydrated

### COVID-19 Safety Measures

- Stay 2 metres apart
- Wear a face covering
- Wash your hands frequently
- Stay home when you are sick
- Get tested if you have symptoms

### Prepare the supplies you will need:

- » Garbage bags and/or bins for common litter
- » Puncture Proof Containers (e.g., hard plastic or metal with a lid) for hazardous litter
- » Gloves
- » Tongs, garbage pickers
- » First aid kit; hand sanitizer
- » Shovels, rakes, brooms (optional)

A limited supply of gloves, tongs, and puncture proof containers are available through Southwestern Public Health by calling 1-800-922-0096. Learn more and watch our video about [safe sharps disposal](#) on our website.

# Let's Get to the Point: Safe Clean-Up Instructions

Before heading out on your cleanup, make sure everyone knows how to safely collect common litter (e.g., food wrappers, masks, plastic cups, straws, bags, etc.) as well as more hazardous litter (e.g., razor blades, needles, broken glass, or other sharp objects). Plan ahead, be prepared, and teach children NOT to touch sharps and tell an adult if they find one.

## Instructions for collecting common litter:

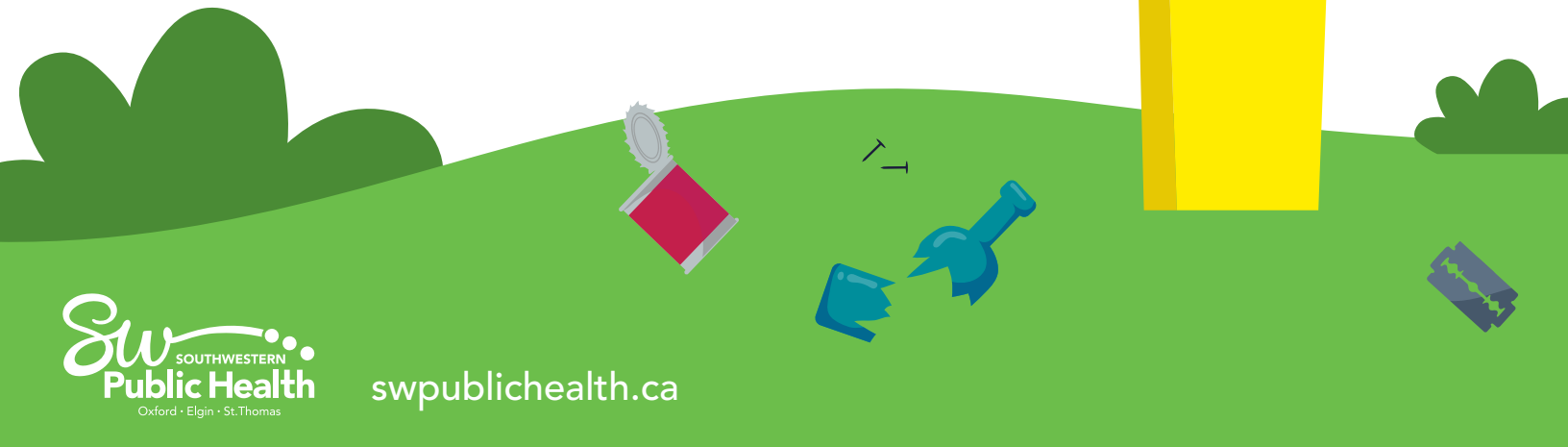
1. Before collecting, put on the appropriate personal protective equipment (face covering if within 2m of others, gloves, reflective vest).
2. If possible, use tongs or pick-up sticks to avoid direct contact with litter.
3. Collect debris into the appropriate bag or other container.
4. Take all necessary precautions, including being cautious near riverbanks or roads, having adults handle dangerous items, and supervising children closely.
5. Remember to wash or sanitize your hands frequently and when you are finished.
6. Make sure bags and bins are properly closed, and take to a local garbage disposal location.

## Instructions for collecting more hazardous litter:

1. Put on gloves if you aren't already wearing them.
2. Place your puncture-proof container on a stable surface beside the hazardous litter (use any thick plastic, glass, or metal container with a lid).
3. Use tongs to carefully collect the hazardous litter. Keep sharp points/edges pointed away from you and never attempt to recap a used needle.
4. Place the item(s) into the container pointy end first and close the lid.
5. Remove gloves and wash hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer.
6. Take the container to a local disposal location, as listed on our website:
  - [Disposal locations Elgin and St. Thomas](#)
  - [Disposal locations Oxford](#)

## Contact

If you have any other questions, reach out to Southwestern Public Health at 1-800-922-0096.





# Talking to Children About Needles

Because children are curious, you can expect they will have questions if they find sharps in the community. How you respond depends on your child's age and the information you feel comfortable giving to them. It is important to answer questions if you can. This may be a great opportunity to give your child valuable information for their safety and give them some understanding about an issue people may face in the community around them.

## Teaching your kids about needle safety:

Show your child a picture of a syringe so they know what a needle looks like in case they find one.

### If they find a needle, tell them:

- » Do not touch it. Needles can be sharp and may hurt you and they can have germs on them.
- » If you are playing with friends, tell them not to touch it while you get an adult.
- » Tell an adult you trust about the needle. It's the adult's job to make sure the needle is thrown away properly.



This information has been adapted with permission from Lauri Watkins, [www.seeneedle.com](http://www.seeneedle.com)

# When a child asks: Why are there needles on the ground?

**For young children, keep it simple:**  
"People throw things away incorrectly all the time. People throw their cigarettes on the ground and coffee cups too."

## Additional Information:

- » Needles are used to put a medicine or a drug inside a person's body. When a needle has been used, it will have the person's germs on it. Because needles are sharp, they might cut/poke you if you touch them which would hurt and would expose you to their germs.
- » People who have left a needle behind, likely did not leave it there to hurt anyone. Sometimes things are dropped by accident, and sometimes things are thrown away improperly because people do not know where to put them. We know it isn't safe to leave needles on the ground, so it is important to know how to clean them up and how to throw them away.

