

# How to Order, Distribute, and Use Safer Inhalation Supplies



Glass stems, bowl pipes, and foils are available through the BCCDC harm reduction supply program. This document offers tips for harm reduction service providers on ordering and handing out these supplies. We also include tips on reducing risk of harm when inhaling (smoking) substances, that service providers can share with clients.

## Ordering Supplies

Only order the supplies that you need. Orders may be adjusted so we can make sure every site across the province gets some supplies.

## Distributing Supplies

Try to avoid giving out pre-packaged bags of harm reduction supplies. When possible, provide the supplies requested and offer supports and education. This may not always be possible due to staffing and locations. Distributing harm reduction supplies is an opportunity for connection and safer substance use teaching. The below guidance is meant for individuals, but site staff may use their judgement and give extra supplies if needed, depending on how much their sites have available. For example, some small rural health centres or remote sites may give extra supplies to those who support others in their community.

## Stems/crack pipes (heat and shatter resistant glass)

Using your own helps prevent transmission of HIV, hepatitis C, infections, and other harms

- Give up to 2 stems per person, per day.
- Encourage each person to use their own stem.
- Hand out stems together with mouthpieces, screens, wooden push sticks, and alcohol swabs.
- These stems are not meant to be used as hooters (the tube used to inhale vapour). The safest options for a hooter from the BCCDC supply program are rolled foil and vinyl tubing. Paper straws are not recommended because they can catch fire and cause burns. People can also use other materials, such as pens or metal straws.
- Encourage people to throw out broken or used pipes in a sharps container.

## Brass screens

Using brass screens instead of Brillo helps prevent inhalation of large particles and reduces the risk of burns and lung damage caused by broken Brillo fragments

- Give 2 packages of screens with every stem.
- Show how to load screens into a pipe.

## Vinyl tubing for mouthpieces

Using your own helps prevent cuts, burns, and transmission of HIV, hepatitis C, infections, and other harms

- Cut vinyl tubing to 3 or 4 inches long.
- Give 2 cut tubes with each stem.
- Show how to use tubing as a hooter.
- Medium tubing (5/16" x 7/16") fits the 8mm stems.
- Large tubing (3/8" x 1/2") fits the 10mm stems and bowl pipes.
- Encourage each person to use their own vinyl tubing.
- Cutters are available to order for cutting vinyl tubing into pieces.

## Bowl/meth pipes (heat and shatter resistant glass)

Using your own helps prevent transmission of HIV, hepatitis C, infections, and other harms

- Give up to 1 bowl pipe per person, per day.
- Encourage each person to use their own pipes.
- Hand out pipes together with mouthpieces, wooden push sticks, and alcohol swabs.
- Encourage people to throw out broken or used pipes in a sharps container

## Foils

Using harm reduction foil, which is uncoated and thicker than kitchen foil, can help prevent disintegration and reduce the risk of overheating substances

- Give up to 10 sheets per person, per day.
- Show how to use foil as a hooter.
- If you can, hand out foil in an envelope to prevent it from crumpling.

## Tips for Reducing Harms when Inhaling Substances

Handing out harm reduction supplies is an opportunity to teach clients about safer substance use, especially when inhaling substances.

Key messages for clients:

- Inhaling substances carries just as much risk of a drug poisoning as injecting.
- Sharing inhalation supplies can spread infections like HIV and Hepatitis C.
- Inhaling substances can lead to breathing problems.
- There is a risk of cutting or burning your lips, mouth, and lungs if you inhale substances.

### Reduce their risk of accidental drug poisoning

- 1 Encourage clients to use their own inhalation supplies to avoid accidental cross contamination. Shared supplies can have unknown substances in them.
- 2 If they do share pipes, encourage clients to:
  - **Ask and tell** before sharing a pipe. Ask people what they've inhaled, and tell people what you've inhaled in your pipe.
  - Use one pipe for opioids (down) and another pipe for stimulants (up, side, crystal meth, crack).
  - Be mindful that people might use different ways to tell their pipes apart (colours, stickers, etc.). There is no common system - always ask and tell.
- 3 Start low and go slow.
- 4 Do not use alone.
- 5 Use at an OPS or use a virtual OPS.
- 6 Use drug checking services if you can.
- 7 Carry naloxone.

### Reduce their risk for transmission of infection

- 1 Encourage clients not to share pipes, mouthpieces, foil, or hooters.
- 2 If clients do share pipes, they should use their own mouthpiece (this can also reduce the risk for burns and cuts to the mouth).
- 3 If clients do share foil, they should use their own hooter.
- 4 Encourage clients to wash their hands before using.
- 5 Encourage clients to keep their pipe clean. There is limited evidence to suggest that cleaning pipes with alcohol or bleach reliably gets rid of infectious diseases.

### Reduce their risk for burns, cuts, and breathing problems

- 1 Suggest to clients they inhale slowly and exhale immediately. Don't hold vapour in the lungs.
- 2 Offer brass screens. Suggest they don't use Brillo because it can break off and cause burns. If they use Brillo, show them how to pack it between brass screens.
- 3 Encourage them to handle glass pipes carefully and cool their pipe down before they put it away to avoid burns.

### Caring for Pipes

- 1 Encourage clients not to store their pipe in a naloxone kit. If clients do, encourage them to label it. Suggest they use a hard plastic case instead, like a glasses case.
- 2 Encourage clients to replace their pipes when:
  - It gets chipped, cracked, or has burnt residue inside.
  - Someone else used their pipe.
  - It has been used with an unknown substance.
- 3 Suggest they use a push stick and avoid scraping their pipe with metal.
- 4 Suggest they let their pipe cool down on its own. Don't speed up the cooling process.
- 5 Encourage them not to use a torch lighter on bubbles pipes. This can weaken the glass and cause it to break.