

# 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 provides guidance on how to order and distribute inhalation (smoking) supplies and safer substance use education to reduce harms from substance use.

## 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

Distributing harm reduction supplies is an opportunity for connection and safer substance use education.

When possible, provide the supplies requested individually and offer education on how to use supplies and ways to reduce substance use harms. This may not always be possible due to staffing and locations.

Having bulk inhalation supplies available helps to customize packaging of supplies for individuals and reduce waste from pre-packaged supplies.

## Pre-Packaging Supplies

Some sites may need to pre-package supplies due to location, resources, and staffing.

If your site distributes pre-packaged supplies, try to include only what supplies are needed based on the method of use. This means that pre-packaged kits should not include all inhalation supplies in each package. This also helps avoid unused supplies being discarded in community.

Sites may find it useful to create different types of pre-packaged kits based on the types of supplies used (e.g., foil and hooter kits, bubble pipe kits, and straight stem kits).

Label kits by supply type (rather than substance), since supplies can be used for different substances.

If your site is giving out pre-packaged kits, check with local peers about what supplies to include.

Practices change often. Review supplies regularly to make sure they fit the community's current needs.

# Distribution Guidance by Supply Type

## Glassware Distribution

Up to 2 of any pipe (stems and/or bowls) per person, per day with the goal to support clients in having separate pipes for stimulants and opioids and minimizing risks from cross-contamination.

- 2 stem pipes **OR**
- 2 bowl pipes **OR**
- 1 stem pipe and 1 bowl pipe

**Note:** Staff may use their judgement to distribute in a way that considers their client's or their site's unique context (e.g. rural/remote sites or regions) while also considering the site's inventory.

## Stems/tube glass (heat and shatter resistant glass)

- 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 use their own pipe.
- Using your own helps prevent transmission of hepatitis B, hepatitis C, infections, and other harms.
- 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.

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

- Encourage people to use their own pipe.
- Using your own helps prevent transmission of hepatitis B, hepatitis C, infections, and other harms.
- 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.

## 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 hepatitis B, 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.

## 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 full length 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. Offer supports and encourage safer substance use practices using a nonjudgmental harm reduction approach.

## Key messages for clients:

- **Reduce risk of drug poisoning.** Inhaling substances carries just as much risk as injecting.
- **Use your own inhalation supplies.** Sharing supplies can spread infections (like hepatitis B, hepatitis C) or cause accidental drug poisoning.
- **Prevent injuries.** Use a mouthpiece and brass screens to avoid cuts and burns to your mouth, lips, and lungs.

## Reduce risk of accidental drug poisoning

- 1 Use your own inhalation supplies (mouthpiece, pipe, foil, and hooter). Shared supplies can have unknown substances in them.
- 2 If pipes are shared:
  - **Ask and tell** before sharing a pipe. Ask people what they've inhaled, and tell people what you've inhaled in your pipe.
  - Use whatever personal supplies you have (mouthpieces, foil, or hooter)
  - Use one pipe for opioids (down) and another pipe for stimulants (up, side, crystal meth, crack).
  - Be aware that people 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 if possible. Use with a buddy and take turns or use at an OPS or a virtual OPS.
- 5 Use drug checking services if you can.
- 6 Carry naloxone.

## Reduce risk of transmitting infection

- 1 Use your own inhalation supplies (mouthpiece, pipe, foil, and hooter).
- 2 If pipes are shared, use whatever personal supplies you have (mouthpieces, foil, or hooter)
- 3 If foil is shared, use your own hooter.
- 4 Wash hands before using.
- 5 Keep your pipe clean. There is limited evidence to suggest that cleaning pipes with alcohol or bleach reliably gets rid of infectious diseases.

## Reduce risk of burns, cuts, and breathing problems

- 1 Use a mouthpiece that is at least 3-4" long
- 2 Inhale slowly and exhale immediately. Don't hold vapour in the lungs.  
Use brass screens. Avoid Brillo - has a chemical coating and it can break off and cause burns. If you use it, pack it between screens.
- 3
- 4 Handle glass pipes carefully. Cool pipe down before putting it away to avoid burns.

### Caring for Pipes

- 1 Do not store pipes in a naloxone kit. Use a different hard plastic case, such as a sunglasses case. If a naloxone kit is used for storage, label it.
- 2 Replace your pipe when:
  - It gets chipped, cracked, or has burnt residue inside.
  - Someone else has used the pipe.
  - It has been used with an unknown substance.
- 3 Use a push stick and avoid scraping your pipe with metal.
- 4 Let your pipe cool down on its own. Don't speed up the cooling process.
- 5 Try not to use a torch lighter on bubbles pipes. This can weaken the glass and cause it to break.