

Accessing Syringes in Louisiana

Sterile syringes are an essential tool in preventing transmission of HIV, hepatitis C (HCV) and other blood-borne pathogens, as well as soft tissue infections, in people who inject drugs.

There are several ways to get sterile syringes in Louisiana. Syringe service programs are free resources that provide a variety of wrap-around services in addition to new syringes and syringe disposal, but these programs are only available in certain parts of the state. Pharmacies and online ordering are usually easier to access, but are not free and may involve additional barriers.

At the Pharmacy

Laws and regulations relating to and governing pharmacists in Louisiana can be found on the Louisiana Board of Pharmacy website (pharmacy.la.gov). The Louisiana Administrative Code, Title 46:LII, covers the Professional and Occupational Standards for Pharmacists. The sale of syringes is covered in Chapter 25: Prescriptions, Drugs and Devices under §2509.

The main takeaways are:

- It is legal to buy syringes from any pharmacy in Louisiana without a prescription.
- It is up to each pharmacist to decide if there is a “legitimate medical need.”
- The “prevention of the transmission of communicable diseases” is considered a legitimate medical need by the Louisiana Board of Pharmacists, which makes selling syringes for any personal use, including injection drug use, an allowable practice because it reduces the sharing of syringes and the associated risk of HIV/HCV transmission.^{1,2}
- Access to sterile syringes, for drug use or any other purpose, prevents transmission of communicable diseases, specifically HIV and HCV.
- Access to sterile syringes reduces HIV/HCV transmission.

There is **NO** state, parish or local ordinance that:

- Prohibits the sale of syringes without a prescription,
- Requires a valid state ID to buy syringes without a prescription,
- Requires that you be a resident of the parish where the pharmacy is located to buy syringes,
- Requires you to provide your full name and address in writing to the pharmacy to buy syringes,
- Requires you to engage with local police to buy syringes without a prescription, or
- Requires documentation of a medical condition to buy syringes without a prescription.

Notes for customers:

If pharmacists engage in discriminatory practices regarding the sale of prescription devices, you can file a complaint with the Louisiana Board of Pharmacy at pharmacy.la.gov/page/how-to-file-a-complaint. Pharmacists are NOT required to sell syringes over the counter, but they are encouraged to do so by state law.

Accessing Syringes in Louisiana

Outside the Pharmacy

*Unable to find a pharmacy that will sell sterile syringes in your area?
Here are some other options to consider:*

Buying online

It is legal and easy to buy syringes online without a prescription. Online retailers like Amazon sell a variety of syringe brands and sizes.

Syringe service programs

Syringe service programs (SSPs) are free, community-based prevention programs that can provide a range of services, including access to and disposal of sterile syringes and injection equipment; vaccination, testing and linkage to care and treatment for infectious diseases; and linkage to substance use disorder treatment. Find hours and locations of SSPs in Louisiana at bit.ly/ldh_ssp.

Transitioning routes of administration

Reusing your old syringes causes damage to your veins and skin as it dulls the tip. Sharing syringes is a high-risk activity for the transmission of HIV and hepatitis C. Transitioning routes of administration or changing the way you consume drugs — to snorting, smoking, eating, or rectal administration — can give your veins a break without requiring hard-to-find supplies. Learn more about transitioning routes of administration at bit.ly/troutes.

A Note for Pharmacists

You can be a force for change in your community!

- By allowing the OTC sale of syringes, you are providing a valuable service and reducing the risk of HIV/HCV transmission, skin and soft tissue infections, and emergency department utilization in your community.
- People who use drugs are going to use drugs. Denying them access to sterile syringes does not reduce usage — it just makes injection less safe.
- If people are receiving syringes, see if they also want naloxone! Four doses are covered every 30 days with Louisiana Medicaid according to the Louisiana Medicaid Preferred Drug List effective January 2023.

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Estimated HIV incidence and prevalence in the United States, 2010–2015. HIV Surveillance Supplemental Report. 2018;23 (No. 1). Published March 2018.

2. Platt L, Minozzi S, Reed J, et al. Needle syringe programmes and opioid substitution therapy for preventing hepatitis C transmission in people who inject drugs. Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2017;9:CD012021. doi:10.1002/14651858.CD012021.pub2.