

Vaginal Speculum: A Circular Economy

Colleen Lambert, RN



Provincial Health Services Authority

Background: Single-use disposable speculums are used to perform gynecological exams in RT ACU. Once disposed of, acrylic speculums are sent to the landfill where they take hundreds of years to break down. Eventually, the acrylic speculum breaks down into microplastics which are harmful to human and environmental health.

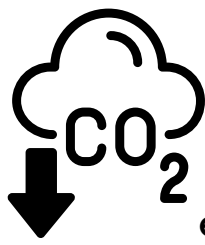
AIM: Reduce use of single-use acrylic speculums in RT ACU by 90% by January 2025

Results: __% reduction of acrylic speculums for gynecologic exams in RT ACU

Stainless steel speculums can be reused **100's** of times




75% Decrease in carbon emissions (assuming 100 uses of steel speculum)²



Average of **15** gynecological exams performed in RT ACU each week

Long-term cost savings of approximately **\$14,780** over 10 years



Approximately **702** single-use disposable speculums saved from entering the landfill each year




414kg CO2e saved in the first year¹

6,220 kilometers driven



122,725 smartphones charged



1,686 pounds of coal burned



647 litres of gasoline



¹ Hall, I., Dean, G., & Clarke, A. (2024). Improving sustainability in sexual health: A pilot project reintroducing reusable stainless steel vaginal specula at a sexual health clinic. International Journal of STD & AIDS, <https://doi.org/10.1177/09564624241298873>
² Morris, M., & Hicks, A. (2022). Life cycle assessment of stainless-steel reusable speculums versus disposable acrylic speculums in a university clinic setting: A case study. Environmental Research Communications, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.1088/2515-7620/ac4a3d>