

I Inject Drugs: How can I inject more safely?

If you are injecting drugs and are not ready or willing to stop, it is important to inject as safely as possible. These steps can help you avoid infections.



AVOID SHARING & RE-USING:

- Do not share syringes or works, including cotton, cookers, water (for mixing or rinsing), or ties (tourniquets), as they can transmit HIV and hepatitis.
- If you are sharing drugs with someone else, do a dry divide on a clean surface before you add the water.
- Keep everything separate from your drug using partners, including your syringe, clean workspace, works, etc. Do not let the other person's syringe or fingers contaminate your works.
- Prepare your own shot and inject yourself, to avoid getting bacteria from someone else's hands.
- Do not re-use syringes and works, even for yourself:
 - They can damage your veins and cause infections.
 - Do not save/hoard cottons to use for later when you can't get any dope, as they can transmit bacteria into your veins.
 - Your local syringe/needle exchange program is a good source for filters.
 - Using something like a cigarette filter or a used filter can give you cotton fever.
 - Keep your shooting & rinsing water separate, and do not reuse water containers without cleaning them thoroughly.
- Mark your syringes and works, if you do save them, to prevent others from getting HIV or hepatitis.



OVER



A CLEANER SHOT:

- Wash your hands with soap and water before preparing your shot.
- Prepare your shot on a clean surface, such as an unread section of newspaper or magazine, or the middle of a pad of paper.
 - When your shot is ready, only lay it down on a clean surface, otherwise, it can pick up bacteria.
- Clean your skin where you are going to shoot with an alcohol pad or soap - before shooting.
 - Bacteria can enter your blood if you haven't cleaned your hands or the skin where you inject.
 - This can travel in your blood and infect the valves or lining of your heart.
 - This can also contribute to painful abscesses.
 - Also, don't lick the needle, or your skin where you inject - your mouth has lots of bacteria.
- Cook your dope for at least 15 seconds to kill germs and avoid infection, about the time it takes to sing Happy Birthday. Cooking will not make your drugs evaporate.
- Avoid muscling or skin-popping your shot, as this can cause painful abscesses. Use a tie to find a vein.
- Rotate your injection site, and never shoot into an abscess. The sooner you treat an abscess, the better. If skin swells after injection, apply ice. If it doesn't go down in a day or two, seek medical help.
- Shoot in the direction of the flow of blood, which is toward the heart.
- After shooting, stop the blood with a clean cotton pad, paper towel or tissue, not an alcohol pad.
 - Using an alcohol pad after shooting will keep your vein open to bacteria and viruses.



The best way to protect yourself from other diseases is to quit injecting. Ask us about treatment if you are ready.

If you can't quit, we encourage you to change one or more of the ways you inject drugs.

If you inject drugs unsafely, you place yourself at risk of getting other strains of HIV and other diseases, like hepatitis.

Pictures courtesy of CRA - See the full guide @ <http://www.anypositivechange.org/bvcsi.html>