

SAFE(R) DRUG USE

WAYS PEOPLE USE DRUGS

Smoking

Using a pipe, stem, or bong. Make sure everyone has their own pipe or mouthpiece. If you are smoking crack, use a filter.

Snorting

Crush powder as fine as possible & make sure everyone has their own straw. Alternate nostrils between hits.

Swallowing

Pills, crushed in thin paper, or a drink. Mix your own drink so you know how strong it is. Can take up to an hour to kick in so wait a while before consuming more.

Booty Bumping

Use a turkey baster or syringe without a needle. Avoid sharing equipment and get vaccinated for Hep A.

Injecting

Use your own sterile syringes & gear. If you need to reuse syringes, wash with cold water, bleach, & then water again.

BENEFITS OF INJECTING DRUGS

- Very efficient way to use - drugs are absorbed directly into the bloodstream. This can lead to a more intense & longer high.
- Can be more economically efficient - folks may need less drugs compared to smoking or snorting, which saves money.

RISKS OF INJECTING DRUGS

- Criminalization of injection paraphernalia.
- If sharing equipment, HIV/Hep C transmission.
- Higher rates of overdose & overdose related death for people injecting drugs compared to smoking or snorting.
- Skin and soft tissue infections, such as abscess and other bacterial infections - some can be fatal.

SAFER INJECTION TIPS

#1 | Prepare Yourself

- Find a safe, clean, well-lit area
- Clean hands or fingertips with soap & water or an alcohol pad
- Wipe injection area with alcohol pad in one direction

#2 | Prepare Solution

- Using your own clean cooker or spoon, mix drugs with sterile water; heat (add Vitamin C if necessary)
- Add a filter (piece of cotton ball or pellet, AVOID cigarette filters) using clean fingertips
- Insert tip of syringe into filter and pull up solution

#3 | Find A Vein

- Body heat can help veins be more accessible - find a warm place or bundle up!
- Use a tourniquet a few inches above the injection site to help the vein plump up (avoid using shoestrings or leather belts)
- Insert the needle bevel up into the vein.

#4 | Register Your Shot

- Before injecting, pull back slightly on the syringe to check for dark red blood (this means you hit a vein).
- If the blood is bright red, frothy, & pushes back the plunger, you hit an artery, take the syringe out immediately and seek medical advice!
- After registering, release tourniquet before injecting.

#5 | Do A Test Shot

- Inject a little bit of drug solution to "taste" and test strength & effect before injecting more from that syringe
- This can help prevent overdose.

#6 | Inject & Tidy Up

- Once you finish injecting, dispose of used syringe in a sharps container.

There are many reasons why people cannot adopt all these steps. If you can use as many of these as possible regularly, it will dramatically reduce harm. Even using just one reduces harm - celebrate small steps/any positive change!

Revised 2020

FOR MORE RESOURCES, VISIT [HARMREDUCTION.ORG](https://harmreduction.org)

[f](https://www.facebook.com/HarmReductionCoalition) /HarmReductionCoalition [y](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8vXp1vXp1vXp1vXp1vXp1v) /HarmReductionCoalition [t](https://twitter.com/harmreduction) @harmreduction [i](https://www.instagram.com/harmreduction) @harmreduction

**NATIONAL
HARM REDUCTION
COALITION**

SKIN & SOFT TISSUE INFECTIONS (SSTI)

What are SSTI's?

- Skin and soft tissue infections (or SSTIs) are bacterial infections such as abscesses, cotton fever, and endocarditis.
- For people who inject drugs, they can be caused by improperly cleaned skin, a missed shot, non-sterile injection equipment, or contaminated drugs.
- It's critical to provide both the equipment & safer injection education to promote the safest possible injection every time.

Signs of an SSTI

- Bad odor or smell
- Affected area getting bigger
- Redness around edges
- Swelling
- Tenderness
- Thick pus
- Fever/chills
- Pain or loss of feeling

When someone presents with a wound that is causing them pain or other distress our first recommendation is ALWAYS they see a medical professional for diagnosis & treatment. Even if you are 99.9% sure something is wrong only a medical professional can give a diagnosis.

HOW TO MANAGE SSTI'S

- Symptoms might not always appear at the injection site.
- If you miss a shot, apply ICE or frozen item (peas, snow, cold drink) on the same day & elevate. If swelling occurs the next day, apply HEAT regularly using a cloth soaked in hot water, in a sink of warm water, or using a hand warmer.
- Avoid injection at or below the affected area.
- Do not squeeze or poke an abscess. This can introduce more bacteria to the wound.
- If things don't improve after 3 days, or if you are experiencing chills, fever, extreme fatigue or pain on the abscess, SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION. This may be a blood infection which could be deadly.

HOW TO AVOID SSTI'S

- Clean skin prior to injection, including injection site & fingertips.
- Use sterile equipment including syringes, cookers, & cottons.
- Use safe injection techniques (see front) to avoid missed shots & vein injury.
- Cover injection site with a band aid to prevent bacteria from entering.

PROVIDER TIPS

Ask & Listen:

Your participants are the experts! They can tell you what they know, what they need, what's working, & what's not.

Research:

There are plenty of resources out there to help you.

Provide Options:

Cater to a range of ways that people take their drugs by offering a variety of safer use/sex options.

Celebrate Small Steps:

Celebrate small steps: Affirm any positive change!

RESOURCES

National Harm Reduction Coalition:
harmreduction.org

Exchange Supplies:
exchangesupplies.org

Safety Works:
1800safety2.com

Injecting Advice:
injectingadvice.com

Tips:
harmreduction.tips