



Tips For A Safer Injection

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'The benefits would be the lower risk of spread of infections like hepatitis C and HIV. I think that it has been a benefit to my health, definitely. Like being more self aware on safety issues '

Anonymous client from Insite, Vancouver



If you are an injection drug user this book will give you some tips for a safer injection.

Safer injections reduce personal harm such as infections. This includes HIV, Hepatitis B&C, skin abscesses and blood infections.

HIV

- HIV is the virus that leads to AIDS. AIDS damages the body's immune system & makes it harder for the body to fight disease.
- HIV can be spread by sharing used injection equipment or having sex with someone who is infected.
- HIV can only be spread through some body fluids (blood, semen, vaginal fluid, breast milk)

HEPATITIS B & C

- Hepatitis B is spread through blood or body fluids (semen, vaginal secretions, saliva, urine, tears) or coming into contact with open sores of an infected person.
- Hepatitis C infection is spread by contact with infected **blood** (dirty needles, tattoo needles, piercing equipment and used razors).
- Hepatitis B & C put you at risk for liver disease and liver cancer.



Bacterial Infections

Infections happen when germs get into a break in the skin and spread.

■ **You might have an infection if:**

- you have a spot that is sore or red or hot to the touch
- you have a fever (chills, sweaty, shivering)
- you don't feel as good as you usually do

■ **Infections can get bad really fast & can even kill you.** If it doesn't get better in a couple of days, see a doctor.

There may be times when you feel unwelcome at the doctor's office or clinic. Do NOT let that stop you from getting help. Your health is important.

■ Infections can sometimes look like as a sore with pus in it, like a pimple but bigger and more painful. Infections may start at an injection site, but can quickly spread through your body to these places:

- skin or flesh (cellulitis)
- bloodstream (sepsis, "blood poisoning")
- brain (meningitis)
- heart (endocarditis)

■ Help protect yourself from infections:

- wash your hands any time you have a chance
- always clean your injection site with alcohol
- don't lick anything (needle, injection site)
- **don't use dirty needles, even** if they're your own

Be Prepared:

Needles

- Keep a supply of new, clean needles on hand. You can get these through Project X Change.
- Reusing or sharing needles can spread infections like HIV, Hep B and Hep C. Reusing also leads to skin infections and damage to the vein when they become dull from using them over again.
- Don't let other people inject you. Learn how to inject yourself.



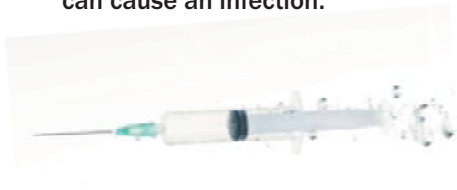
Be Prepared:

Cookers

- Use a new, clean cooker to prepare injections and only draw up from the cooker with new, sterile needles.

Don't share cookers. New, clean cookers are available from Project X Change, where you get new needles.

- Don't share cookers and needles. Reusing cookers can cause an infection.



Water

- Sharing water can cause infection. Get sterile water from Project X Change.
- Using other liquids like tap water, puddle water, toilet water or body fluids like urine and saliva seriously increase your risk of infections.
- Sterile water is your best choice. If you don't have it, use water boiled for 10 minutes.

Be Prepared:

Filters

- Use a new filter every time and throw used ones away as soon as you are done with them. New filters are available from Project X Change.
- Never re-use a filter or share it with another person. Using things like cigarette filters, cotton balls or rolling papers is dangerous.
- Making washes from used filters can cause serious infections.

Alcohol Swabs

- Alcohol swabs are available at Project X Change.
- Use a clean alcohol swab to clean the skin before and after injections to decrease the risk of infections. Sharing or re-using alcohol swabs spreads infection.



Be Prepared:

Acidifiers

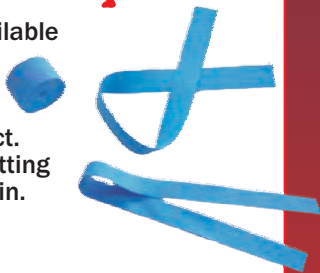
- Single, new packets of ascorbic acid are available through Project X Change.
- Using things like lemon juice and vinegar to break up drugs can be dangerous. It damages your veins and leads to serious infections.
- Even the ascorbic acid from Project X Change can hurt your veins.
- Never share acidifiers because they can spread serious infections.



Be Prepared:

Tourniquets

- New tourniquets/ties are available at Project X Change.
- Use a new, clean easy-release tourniquet each time you inject. This reduces the chance of getting an infection or damaging a vein.



Sharps disposal

- To throw out needles safely, get a sharps container from Project X Change. Put your used needle in the sharps container right away after you inject.



Be Prepared:

Digging around causes damage

- Make your veins easy to find: exercise by flexing muscles or using a squeeze ball.
- Drink lots of water. This will make your veins bigger and easier to find.
- Try to inject in a different place each time.



Condoms

- Always use a new condom for **any** kind of sex (oral, vaginal or anal).
- Project X Change has lots of different kinds of condoms.



Choosing a Place to Inject

BAD PLACES:
X head
X neck
X wrist
X crotch

Safer PLACES:
✓ arms
✓ legs
✓ hands
✓ feet

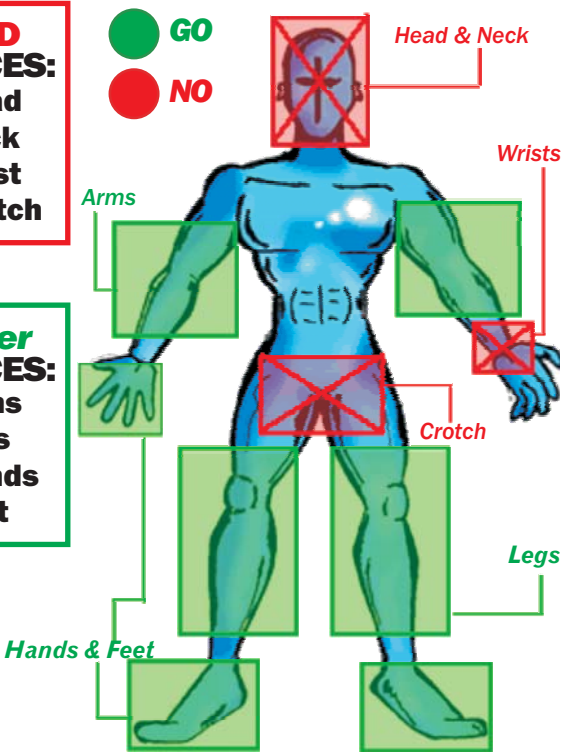


Diagram Courtesy of AIDS Committee Vancouver

Injecting:

- Plan to shoot up in a safe, secure place that has running water.
- Inject with someone else (in case of overdose) but don't share equipment.
- Choose an injection site.
- Try to use a different spot on your body every time you use.
- If you have been clean for a while or have a new dealer, do a small amount first.
- Wash your hands and the injection site with soap and water.
- Clean the injection site with an alcohol swab.
- Put on a clean, new tourniquet/tie.
- Make sure the tourniquet is tight enough that the vein fills up with blood, but can still be pulled off easily.



- Insert the needle into the vein at a 30-45 degree angle, bevel up (sloped side up).

- Pull back the plunger until you see dark red blood coming into the needle. This lets you know that you're in a vein. If the blood is **bright red**, pull out. You may be in an artery. Only inject into a vein, never an artery.

- Untie tourniquet. Inject slowly while taking a deep breath.
- Take the needle out slowly and put pressure on the site with a clean alcohol swab.



After You Inject

- Clean the injection site with an alcohol swab & apply pressure.
- Place all used needles in a sharps container right away.
- Don't lick the site. **Spit causes infection.**
- Try to give your veins a rest, especially if they are damaged. Think about smoking, snorting or eating your drugs instead.



Overdose - What To Watch For

Overdose is the leading cause of death in injection drug users.

WATCH FOR:

■ **Uppers (stimulant)**

cocaine, meth, crack: seizure, chest pain, fast or weird heart beat, loss of control of body, sweating, large pupils, hot body temperature

■ **Downers (depressant) heroin, oxycontin:** heavy snoring, hardly breathing or not breathing at all, blue around the lips, tiredness, body feels limp, cold and clammy skin, slow heart beat

Stay with a person who has overdosed and have someone call 911 for help.

INFECTION:

Seek Medical Help if you have:

- Fever, chills, sweats, dizziness
- Redness, warmth, swelling & pain at injection site
- Headaches, sick to your stomach, throwing up
- Trouble breathing
- Chest pain
- Are feeling sick for many days in a row.



PROJECT X CHANGE

■ **Harm Reduction Services**

Clean needles and a place to get rid of used ones, alcohol swabs, sterile water, cookers, tourniquets, filters, ascorbic acid and sharps containers

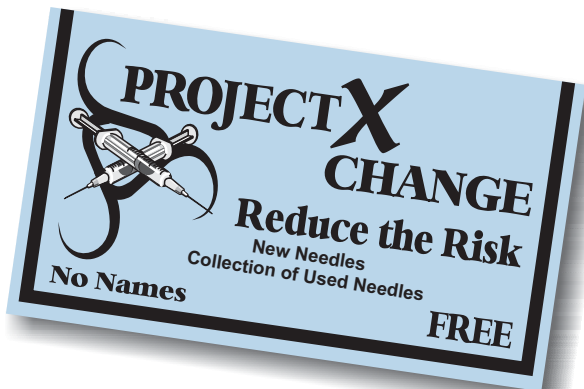
■ **Health information**

Info on diseases that can be contracted through injection drug use and risky sex

■ **Free condoms and lubricant**

■ **Referrals**

Connect with services like health care (e.g. Sexual Health Clinics), addiction counselling and other community resources



PROJECT X CHANGE

Contact Information:

■ **John Howard Society of Durham Region**

Monday-Friday 8:30am-4:30pm

Oshawa 75 Richmond St.W. **905-579-8482**

Ajax 136 Commercial Ave. **905-427-8165**

Bowmanville 132 Church St. **905-623-6814**

Whitby 105 Consumers Drive **905-666-8847**

Project X Change Mobile Outreach:

Monday-Friday 6:00 pm - 11:00 pm

Oshawa, Whitby,

Courtice & Bowmanville **905-438-6870**

Ajax, Pickering & Port Perry **1-888-245-1045**

■ **AIDS Committee of Durham Region**

22 King St. W., Oshawa

Suite 202 **905-576-1445**

■ **Pinewood Centre**

300 Centre St. S., Oshawa **905-723-8195**

Community Supports

■ **John Howard Society of Durham Region Main Office**

75 Richmond St. W, Oshawa

Call: **905-579-8482**

www.jhsdurham.on.ca

■ **Durham Region Health Department Sexual Health Clinics**

Counseling, information, **FREE** STI testing

FREE Hepatitis A & B vaccines

Oshawa **905-433-8901**

Ajax/Pickering **905-420-8781**

Port Perry **905-985-4891**

www.durham.ca

■ **AIDS Committee of Durham Region**

HIV/AIDS counselling, support, information & advocacy

Call: **905-576-1445**

www.aidsdurham.com

■ **Positive Care Clinic**

Individualized approach to care for HIV/AIDS & HEP C

Call: **905-668-6831 ext. 3127**

www.lakeridgehealth.on.ca

■ **Pinewood Centre of Lakeridge Health**

Addiction Services

Call: **905-723-8195**

www.pinewoodcentre.org



Please be safe.

