

INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

A Needle and Syringe Program (NSP or the exchange) worker can tell you where to get safer drug use information.

DirectLine

1800 888 236 • www.directline.org.au
24-hour. If you want to talk to someone about your drug use or find a support service.

Harm Reduction Victoria

(03) 9329 1500 • www.hrvic.org
Peer support and safer using information for people who use drugs. Coordinates the Drug Overdose Prevention/Peer Education (DOPE) program.

Understand Ice

www.understandice.org.au

Touchbase

www.touchbase.org.au
Online resource about harm reduction designed for LGBTIQ people.

Agency details:

SAFER
USING 04

INJECTING

INJECTING INCREASES RISKS

Risks include:

- + Overdose
- + Blood-borne virus like hepatitis C (hep C), hepatitis B (hep B) or HIV
- + Infections, including abscesses and blood poisoning
- + Vein damage, including scarring and collapsed veins
- + Dependence.

There is information keeping your veins healthy in the brochure titled 'Veins'.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Drink enough water

Staying hydrated helps with blood flow and will bump up your veins, making it easier to find one.

Naloxone

Naloxone temporarily reverses the effects of opioid overdose which will allow the person to begin to breathe again.

If you use opioid drugs like heroin or morphine you should speak to a Needle and Syringe Program (NSP or the exchange) worker to find out more about naloxone.

Injecting ice or speed

- Ice and speed make your veins constrict, making it harder to inject
- Caffeine and tobacco make your veins constrict even more
- This increases the risk of missed hits, vein damage and blood-borne viruses
- Using ice or speed can give you hand tremors or blurred vision, so take your time
- If you inject repeatedly during one session, you'll need lots of sterile equipment from the NSP.

Performance and image enhancing drugs (PIEDs)

PIEDs are substances taken by people with the intention of changing their physical appearance and to enhance their sporting performance.

Types of PIEDs include anabolic steroids (roids, gear, juice), peptides and hormones.

If you inject PIEDs, you'll need sterile equipment from the NSP.

There is information on steroids in this series in the brochure titled 'Steroids'.

PLAN AHEAD

When you go to the NSP, take extra needles and syringes and sharps containers so you don't get caught short and have to reuse or share.

Be in control of your own drug use

Learn to self-inject so you don't have to rely on others.

Consider other ways to use

Smoking or shafting (putting drugs up your bum).

Shafting

Mix the gear up the same way as if you were going to inject it. Draw it up into the barrel. Insert the drugs up your bum with a syringe barrel (no needle please!).

Make sure to use plenty of water in the mix to avoid any irritation or damage to your bum.

Filter

Some things are better to use as a filter than others. A corner of a swab or a part of a tampon is much better than a pre-made cigarette filter which can have harmful particles in it. Wheel filters are the best thing to use to filter out insoluble particles if you're injecting pills.

Not all NSPs stock wheel filters but most of the primary NSPs do.

VEINS AND ARTERIES

- Veins carry blood towards the heart and don't have a pulse
- Arteries pump blood away from the heart and have a pulse
- **You don't want to inject into arteries.**

If you hit an artery

It will hurt A LOT!

When you jack back the blood will be a lot brighter red than usual and sometimes the pressure is strong enough to actually force the plunger back.

Stop and take the needle out.

Press some tissue or something like it on the wound and hold it there firmly until the bleeding stops (up to 15 minutes).

Raise the injection site to reduce bleeding.

If the pain persists or it won't stop bleeding, see a doctor as soon as you can.

INJECTING SITES

Most people begin on the inside of the elbow, where there are stable veins close to the surface. See the diagram below.

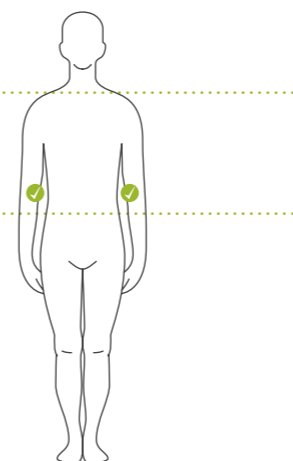
Rotate the injection site. Learn to inject with each hand so you will be able to access veins in both arms which means that injecting sites will have more time to heal in between shots.

Places to avoid injecting

- Neck and head (risk of stroke or serious nerve damage). If you muck up on your arm or leg, worst case scenario you'll end up needing it amputated - you can't have your head amputated, can you!
- Breasts (inflammation and infection of breast tissue, also known as mastitis)
- Injecting below your waist can cause circulation problems
- The veins in your hands and feet are very small and easily damaged. If you are at the point where you are injecting into these veins, then do it slowly and use a syringe with a finer gauge i.e. 29g.

Avoid injecting above your shoulders

Avoid injecting below your waist



Places to avoid injecting

Before you start

Take your time so there's less chance of making a mistake!

Wash your hands and the injecting site before preparing drugs or injecting. If you can't access soap and water, use a few swabs (alcohol wipes).

Tourniquets are not to be applied so tightly that they restrict the flow of blood into the arm as this makes the veins thinner. They must be released as soon as a vein is reached and before injecting. If not, the drug will often leak out around the needle and cause a miss.

Medical tourniquets are not necessarily better than a belt or tie if they cannot easily be released. It's important to develop a technique to release the tourniquet without letting go of the needle.

If you're sharing the gear, each of you should have your own new stuff. Your mates might not know they've got hep C.

If you're going to split a mix-in solution, make sure that it is prepared by someone who has washed their hands, using sterile syringes and a clean spoon, water and filter.

Injecting into a vein

Take your time. Injecting too fast will damage or tear the vein due to too much pressure, and often the solution will leak out slowly under the skin which means that you will lose some of your shot.

If you can feel a pulse, you are at an artery - don't inject into it.

Place the needle onto the vein, pointing the same way as the blood flow - towards the heart.

Make sure you are in a vein - jacking back will result in blood showing in the barrel.

If you're using a tourniquet, release it carefully before you inject.

After injecting, slide the needle out and apply pressure to the site to prevent bleeding and bruising. A swab will encourage bleeding, so use a tissue instead.

Jacking back repeatedly at the end of your shot won't get more drugs into you, but it will definitely cause damage.

Dispose of needles and syringes safely.
