

INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

A Needle and Syringe Program (NSP or the exchange) worker can give you information, help you find services and make appointments for you.

Your doctor will be able to give you support and advice.

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.

Better Health Channel

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
Health services and service directory.

Understand Ice

www.understandice.org.au
Information on ice for the individual, friends and families.

Health Complaints Commissioner

www.hcc.vic.gov.au
Support in resolving complaints about health services.

Agency details:

SAFER
USING 12

KEEPING
HEALTHY

Whether you use drugs every day or just now and again, it's important to look after your health.

The healthier you are, the better position you'll be in to deal with what's going on in the rest of your life.

STAY HYDRATED

Your body needs water to work properly. If you don't have enough water you can become dehydrated, which can give you headaches, cause dizziness and, in severe cases, can cause kidney failure.

Staying hydrated will also bump up your veins making it easier to find one.

EAT WELL

Eating as well as you can will keep your energy levels up and help prevent you from getting sick.

Some foods will even help you keep your veins in good condition:

- Fruit and vegetable
- Fish and white meat
- Pasta and rice.

Try to avoid food with high saturated fat content as this increases your risk of heart disease.

Takeaway food is great for a treat but if you do it regularly it can get really expensive.

It's also often pumped full of sugar, which can make you overweight and cause a lot of health problems.

If you're having money problems, the NSP should have information on eating well on a budget.

You can ask at the NSP for information on eating well.

SLEEP

Getting enough sleep is really important for your physical and mental health.

Sleep does things like:

- Gives your body a chance to repair
- Boost your immune system
- Helps you concentrate the next day.

Not getting enough sleep can make you irritable, make it hard to concentrate and may lead to mental health problems like depression.

Tips to try to get enough sleep

- Get some exercise during the day
- Try to get into a routine of getting up at the same time each morning
- Try not to nap in the daytime
- Avoid things like reading or watching TV in bed
- Don't drink coffee, tea or caffeine drinks in the evening.

EXERCISE

Exercise is good for your overall health and really good for your circulation. Walking, cycling and swimming are great exercises to keep healthy.

SMOKING

Smoking isn't just expensive; it's very damaging to your health. If you smoke cigarettes and you're thinking about quitting, call Quitline on 13 78 48.

ALCOHOL

Alcohol damages your liver. It is better to drink in moderation. If you have hepatitis C try to avoid alcohol or at least cut down the amount you drink.

DENTAL HEALTH

Using some drugs can increase the risk of problems with your teeth and gums.

Many drugs cause dry mouth which can lead to tooth decay, and more serious health problems like heart disease.

If you drink a lot of fizzy drinks because of a dry mouth, the sugar in them will add to dental problems.

Ecstasy, speed and ice can cause you to grind your teeth which can damage them.

Unhealthy teeth and gums can also affect your quality of life.

You may not be able to eat certain foods, which can mean you don't get the vitamins and minerals your body needs.

How to look after your teeth and gums

- Brush your teeth twice a day
- Drink plenty of water
- Cut out or cut down sugary foods and lollies
- Chew sugar-free gum or sugar-free lollies to produce saliva and prevent dry mouth
- Eat foods with lots of calcium like cheese and milk
- Visit a dentist at least once a year.

MENTAL HEALTH

Many people experience mental health problems like depression and anxiety.

There are things you can do to help look after your mental health, like exercising, staying in touch with friends and loved ones, and talking with others about any issues bothering you.

If you are concerned about how you are feeling, you can speak to a doctor or worker at a local community mental health service who will be able to discuss options for supporting you.

If you or someone you know is in a crisis you can ring:

Mental Health Advice Line 1300 280 737

Lifeline 13 11 14

In an emergency 000

HYGIENE

One of the most important things you can do to stay healthy is to look after your hygiene.

Washing your hands can help prevent infections, especially when you're injecting. Washing your body is also important when trying to stay healthy.

IF YOU USE METHAMPHETAMINE

(ICE OR SPEED)

Staying hydrated, eating as well as you can, looking after your teeth and getting enough sleep are all things that will help you stay in good physical and mental health.

There is information on all of these things at www.understandice.org.au.

DOCTORS

Many Needle and Syringe Programs (NSPs or the exchange) are located in community health services. The doctors working in these services often have a better understanding of drug-related issues.

Some of the things doctors can do are:

- Assess your health and identify any problems
- Give vaccinations
- Family planning
- Men's health
- Women's health
- Mental health
- Sexual health
- Some doctors will prescribe hep C treatments
- They can also prescribe Opioid Replacement Therapy like methadone or suboxone®.

Doctors can also refer you to specialist services like:

- Mental health services
- Dentists
- Eye and ear specialists
- Dieticians
- Pathology services for blood tests
- X-ray
- Infectious disease specialists.

An NSP worker can help you find a non-judgemental doctor.

COMPLAINTS

If you are unhappy about the way a doctor has treated you, you can make a formal complaint.

Most hospitals and clinics have procedures for making complaints, and you can also complain through the Office of the Health Services Commissioner (HSC).