

HARM REDUCTION

There are common medical problems related to injection drug use.

Risks of injecting drugs include:

- Damage to blood vessels
- Painful skin infections like cellulitis and abscesses
- Dangerous bloodstream infections that can damage organs such as your heart and spinal cord
- Becoming infected with a virus such as Hepatitis C and HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) Overdose and death

The best way to lower the risks of injecting drugs is to begin treatment with medications like Buprenorphine (Suboxone), Methadone or Naltrexone. If you are interested in treatment, the Emergency Department can help.



USE A NEW NEEDLE EVERY TIME

NEVER share needles



- **Local syringe access/harm reduction resources may provide free, unused needles**
- Many drug stores, like CVS and Walgreens, sell unused insulin needles.
- **Do not sharpen an old needle** – it creates barbs that can damage your skin and blood vessels.
- **If you must re-use a needle, cleaning it before use may reduce the risk of infection.**
 - Flush it with sterile water. If you don't have sterile water, use cold tap water. Fill the syringe with household bleach. Shake for 2 minutes. If you don't have bleach, you can use rubbing alcohol or hydrogen peroxide. Flush it with water again before use

USE STERILE WATER OR SALINE TO MIX

Tap water contains bacteria that can cause an infection when injected.

- Local syringe access/harm reduction resources may provide free sterile water or sterile saline
- Many drug stores, like CVS and Walgreens, sell sterile water.
- If you do not have sterile water, you can boil water for 10 minutes. Let the water cool before injecting.



CLEAN YOUR SKIN BEFORE YOU INJECT

Even with unused needles and sterile water, bacteria on your skin can enter your blood when injecting.

- Wash your hands with soap and water before injecting.
- When you are ready to inject, rub your skin with an alcohol wipe to kill the bacteria on your skin. If you do not have an alcohol wipe, wash with soap and water.
- Do not lick needles



ROTATE INJECTION SITES

Using the same site many times can cause scarring, bruising and infection.



- Rotate injection sites, using different sides and different veins.
- If you are using the same vein, inject at least one inch away from the previous site.
- Avoid the veins in your neck, groin and feet.

REDUCE RISK OF OVERDOSE

Don't use alone.

- Whenever possible, use with a trusted friend or partner. Take turns injecting



Have naloxone (Narcan) at arm's reach when you inject.

- Narcan can save your life if you overdose.
- Make sure your partner knows where the Narcan is and how to use it in case of an overdose
- Local syringe access/harm reduction resources may have Narcan for free
- Drug stores, like CVS and Walgreens, provide Narcan without a prescription

REDUCE YOUR RISK OF OVERDOSE

Don't mix heroin with other drugs or alcohol.

If you have not used drugs in a while, or if you are buying from a new dealer, your body may not be used to the strength of the drug, or it may have fentanyl.

You should:

- Start with a lower dose.
- Consider using a “tester shot”, injecting a small amount first to make sure the drug is not too strong, before you inject your regular dose.

CALL 911 AND GIVE NARCAN IF YOU SEE AN OVERDOSE

Signs of overdose include slow breathing, blue face or lips, or if you are unable to wake the person. If you suspect an overdose

- CALL 911 immediately!
- Give Narcan if you have it
- DO NOT try to inject salt water, inject stimulant drugs, or put the victim in a cold-water bath.

The Good Samaritan Law protects you from getting in trouble if you call 911 for a friend using drugs, even if you are using drugs too. This does not apply to drug dealing or warrants.

SYRINGE SERVICE SITES

Have naloxone (Narcan) at arm's reach when you inject.

- Syringe Services Sites provide free supplies for people who inject drugs, including: Naloxone (NARCAN), unused needles, sterile water, alcohol pads, cookers and tourniquets.
- They will help teach you how to inject safely to reduce the risk of complications
- They can help you find treatment, support and resources to improve your life.

WWW.NASEN.ORG/MAP/