


## CLEANING UP

- If you think you might have to reuse your own syringe you should rinse your syringe immediately in clean cold tap water. This will remove most of the blood and help reduce the likelihood of HIV and hepatitis C transmission if someone accidentally sticks themselves with the used needle.
  - Recap your own syringe, mark it and store in a safe place.
  - Dispose of the water you used to rinse your syringe.
  - If you are sure you will not be reusing your syringe, dispose of it straight after use, without recapping into a disposal container or a puncture proof, child proof container (one with a lid that can be securely closed).
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- Wherever possible, return your disposal container to the nearest needle exchange (NSEP).
  - Wipe down the area where you mixed up with soapy water. Where there is the possibility of contact with skin the area should be wiped down with household bleach.
  - Don't reuse swabs, filters or open water ampoules as they become contaminated once opened. Dispose of this used material in your disposal container or double bag it and dispose of it with or in your household rubbish.
  - When you have cleaned up, wash your hands and arms with warm soapy water. If this is not possible, use new swabs and swab once in one direction only with each new swab.

## USING IN GROUPS

- When you are injecting with other people you have to be even more blood aware. This includes having your own sterile syringe, sterile water, swabs, clean spoons, filters and tourniquets. Keeping your own equipment separate and marked will help reduce the risk of mix ups which can result in the transmission of HIV and/or hep C. If you have to divide a mix, everyone will need sterile syringes (and a clean spoon, water, and filter).
- Go through all the steps outlined above and when it comes to drawing up, as long as the syringes are sterile they can go into the spoon and you can pull up your hit.
- If you only have one sterile syringe, that's the only one that can go into the spoon. That syringe can divide the other hits into separate clean spoons and people can then draw up their own. It might take a few extra minutes but it can save someone from contracting HIV, hep B or hep C.
- *If there are no sterile syringes the powder should be divided while dry.*

## INJECTING PILLS

- If you are injecting pills use *pill filters (wheel filters)* if you can get them. If you can't, filter your mix at least three times to remove the impurities that can cause problems to your veins and blood flow.

### \* \* \* \* W A R N I N G \* \* \* \*

Peer Based Harm Reduction WA does not endorse or promote drug use. All drug use has attendant harms associate with it. This resource is not intended for general distribution and is designed to reduce the degree of harm experienced by those already participating in IV drug use.



# A Guide to Safer Injecting



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## PREPARATION

- Choose a safe place to inject: one that is private, clean, well lit with running water.
- Make sure the surface you are going to mix up on is clean. You can use soapy water or swabs to wipe down the surface.
- Make sure you have everything you need within reach: new sterile syringes, new sterile water (or cooled boiled water in a clean glass), new swabs, a new filter, clean spoon and a clean tourniquet.
- Wash your hands and arms thoroughly in warm soapy water, this helps remove viruses, bacteria and plain old dirt. For more information on hand washing see AIVL's 'Guide to Hand Washing'.
- If you can't wash your hands use plenty of new swabs to clean them, particularly the parts of your fingers and hands that will be in contact with any injecting materials.
- Use one swab in one direction only. Going back and forward just spreads the dirt and bacteria around. Allow the swabbed area to dry (It is actually the drying process that kills bacteria).
- Pay close attention to the tip of your index finger and thumb of the hand you are going to use to make up a filter.



## MIXING UP

- Clean the spoon by wiping once in one direction with a new swab and let it dry before you put the drugs in the spoon. Use your sterile syringe to draw up water from the newly opened ampoule of sterile water, or cooled boiled water in a clean glass.
- Add the water and use the blunt end of your syringe to mix.
- Depending on which drug you intend to use, you may be able to access wheel filters at the local needle exchange. If possible, always use wheel filters, especially for filtering pills or large quantities of liquid.
- For Heroin and Speed (or Ice), the best filters are the (freshly unopened) sterile cotton balls in your 'fit pack' or a bit of an unopened tampon.
- Filters you buy from tobacconists do not have fiberglass in them (unlike some tailor made cigarette filters).
- Use your fingers not your teeth to pull apart the filter (the mouth is full of germs).
- Draw up the mix by gently laying the hole of the needle on the filter.
- Remove air bubbles by pointing the needle skywards and tapping it on the side. The bubbles will rise to the top; push the plunger slowly until all the bubbles have escaped through the eye of the needle.



- Place the tourniquet above your injection site, but don't tighten yet
- Wipe the injection site in one direction once with a new swab.
- Tighten the tourniquet, don't leave it too long. If you are having trouble finding a vein release and try again.
- Opening and closing your hand in a pumping action can help raise a vein. Also, warm water over your arm/ injecting site can help bring veins up, a wash cloth that you wet with hot water and place on the site works well. You will need to re-swab the site after doing this.
- Put the needle into your arm at a 45-degree angle with the eye facing up. Blood will sometimes appear in the barrel when the needle is inserted in the vein.
- Slowly pull back the plunger and blood will appear if you are in the vein.
- If no blood appears loosen the tourniquet and remove the needle. Keep the arm outstretched; add pressure to the injection site with a clean cotton ball, tissue or toilet paper to stop any bleeding. Take a deep breath and start again. When you are sure the needle is in the vein, loosen the tourniquet and slowly depress the plunger. If you feel any resistance or pain you may have missed or 'popped' the vein and will have to start again.
- When finished, slowly remove the needle, keep your arm outstretched and pressure to the injection site for a couple of minutes using a cotton ball, tissues or toilet paper. Don't use a swab as the alcohol in it may stop the blood clotting.

