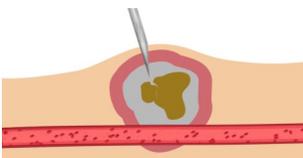
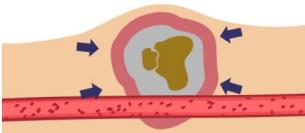


Repeated injections in the same area can aggravate the infection and make it bigger, harder to heal, and potentially more dangerous.



Since the body cannot kill the infection as quickly as it grows, the abscess becomes bigger and bacteria can spread to infect your heart and other organs.



## How we can help...

### Clinic hours

Ask our staff about clinic opening hours or call us:

**Perth:** 9325 8387

**Southwest:** 9791 6699



Our Nurse Practitioner can support you with testing and treatment for blood-borne viruses and STIs as well as any injection infection issues you may have.

Our free health clinic is a judgement-free place where you can be yourself and speak openly about your concerns. No appointment is necessary.

## What to do with an abscess...

If allowed to grow unchecked, an abscess will spread bacteria into the bloodstream and may also cause infections in your heart and other organs.

- If you notice a lump after injecting, apply a warm compress and elevate the area. A missed shot will go down within a day. An infected abscess will not.
- If the lump is red or feels hot, it may be infected. Draw a line with a pen around the redness. If the redness grows beyond the line, the infection may be spreading. Seek medical treatment promptly.
- **If you experience fever, chills, nausea or vomiting, extreme fatigue, or pain associated with an abscess, seek medical attention immediately because you could have a blood infection.**
- Pain or swelling in the groin or armpits may also mean you have an infection for which you should seek medical treatment.

## Our website

You can find Peer Based Harm Reduction WA online at:

**[www.harmreductionwa.org](http://www.harmreductionwa.org)**

Simply click on "Resources" at the top of the page to find a selection of printed brochures and videos about vein care, safer injecting and more.



## Our staff

Got a question? Ask us! Our NSEP staff are available to answer your questions about injection infection. We can provide filtering, swabbing and equipment demonstrations too.

*"No uncomfortable feelings here, the staff understand you."*

*"Very friendly and knowledgeable staff."*

*"These guys are champions!"*

- Google Reviews

### Peer Based Harm Reduction WA

#### Perth

Unit 22 / 7 Aberdeen Street

Perth WA 6000

P: (08) 9325 8387

#### Southwest

97 Spencer Street

Bunbury WA 6230

P: (08) 9791 6699

[www.harmreductionwa.org](http://www.harmreductionwa.org)

# Injection Infection



peer based  
harm reduction wa

## What causes injection infection?

It's not about being clean or dirty. There are always bacteria living on our skin and on the surface of objects without causing us any problems. However, when you inject, you can accidentally push bacteria through your skin with the needle. It can grow and spread inside your body, leading to conditions like abscesses, endocarditis, cellulitis, septicemia and gangrene which can all be life-threatening.

The good news is that you can reduce your risk of these complications by incorporating the following simple practices into your injecting routine. By addressing these factors now, you could end up saving yourself a lot of time and trouble later. It's never too late to change the way you do things.



## What you can do about it...

### 1. Soap and water

Wash your hands, fingers and injection site with soap and water (and wash them *after* injecting as well to reduce the risk of spreading blood-borne viruses).

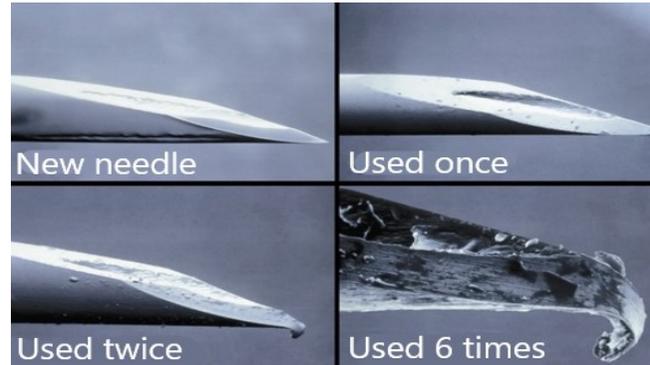
Where possible, try to make sure the area you mix up in is also clean. If you don't have access to soap and water you can use hand sanitizer or even alcohol swabs.

### 2. Use sterile equipment

Do use sterile equipment—Fits, spoons, water, filters. Blunt needles cause more damage, and also make it more likely that you will miss the vein.

### 3. Don't re-use equipment

Don't re-use injecting equipment. Bacteria live and grow inside a used needle or syringe and can cause infection if re-used. If you think you may have to re-use your syringe again later and you can't avoid it, rinse it several times with cold tap water immediately after use.



### 4. Swab effectively

You will need a minimum of two swabs to effectively clean your site before injecting. Gently agitate the first swab over your injection site to loosen the dirt and germs. Then use the second swab to wipe across your site in one direction, pushing the dirt and germs to one side like a squeegee.

Allow the wetness to dry. Don't wipe it afterward or blow on it to make it dry faster. The alcohol in the swab needs to evaporate to kill the bacteria and sterilize the site.

### 5. Always filter

Not filtering your mix can expose you to a variety of harms. You could inject particles that can block veins and damage your heart or lungs. You could also let bacteria or fungal spores enter your blood stream. If you don't filter, a missed shot is more likely to lead to an infection such as cellulitis or an abscess. Ask Peer Based Harm Reduction staff to recommend a filter for your needs.

**Our NSEP stocks the following filtering options:**

**Sterile Cotton** = Free

**Sterifilt** = 40 cents each

**Green Wheel** = \$1.50 each

**Blue Wheel** = \$1.50 each

### 6. Make sure the needle is in the vein before injecting

Check out our "Finding Veins" brochure for tips on finding veins. If you can't get a vein, you may need to consider taking your drugs another way. Check out our "Alternate Routes of Administration" brochure for more info.

### 7. Rotate your injection sites to let each spot heal

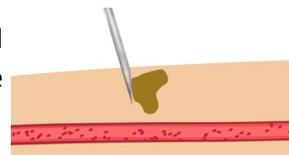
This will also lessen the risk of inflammation and vein collapse. If a vein becomes hard to find due to scarring from repeated injecting, it becomes more likely you will miss. Missed shots can become abscesses.



## What can happen next...

The biggest problem with abscesses is that people tend to ignore them until they get too messy, hoping they will go away. It is easy to treat an abscess, but if left untreated you could end up losing your limb, or your life. The earlier you seek medical attention the easier it will be to treat and the less damage it will do to your body.

Injection misses the vein and leaves bacteria in the tissue under the skin.



White blood cells attack the bacteria but can't eliminate it quickly. Dead white blood cells sit around the infection (pus) and a wall is formed by your body to hold the pus in.

