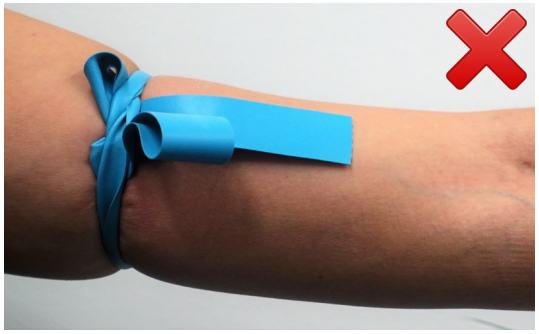
What kind of tourniquet should I use?

The ideal tourniquet has some elasticity and a smooth, wide surface area.

Using a thin, ropey tourniquet or allowing your tourniquet to bunch up and twist when you tighten it can damage your veins or cause them to roll.



Try to ensure the tourniquet forms a smooth, continuously wide band all the way around your arm.

Still have questions about tourniquets? Peer Based Harm Reduction staff can help with answers to your questions and tourniquet demonstrations. Ask us!

Available at Peer Based Harm Reduction

	**Disposable Tourniquet** 50 cents
	**Yellow Tourniquet** $2.00
	**Multicoloured Tourniquet** $11.00

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Tourniquets

A User's Guide

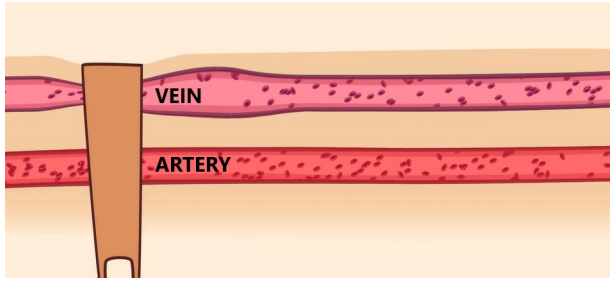
peer based harm reduction wa

Why should I use a tourniquet?

Tourniquets make it easier to inject. There are two ways tourniquets can help. First of all, tourniquets are used to dilate veins, making them bigger so they are easier to find and inject into. Secondly, dilating the veins helps to "anchor" them so they don't roll around as much.

How do tourniquets work?

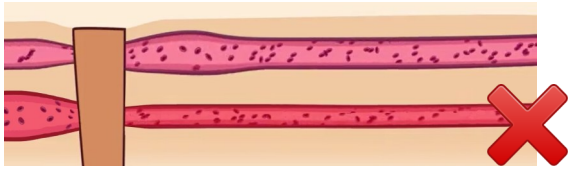
Blood flows into your arm through arteries and back out again through veins. The aim of applying a tourniquet is to temporarily block the blood from exiting while still allowing enough blood to continue flowing into your arm to then build up in the veins behind the tourniquet. The vein becomes temporarily dilated and easier to access.



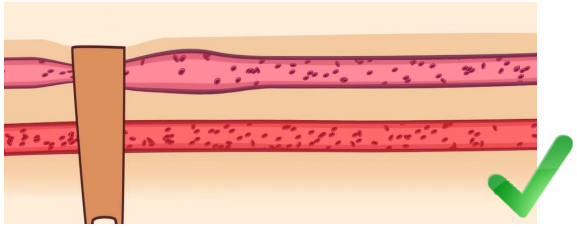
For more tips about how to find veins refer to our "Finding Veins" resource or ask Peer Based Harm Reduction staff.

How tight?

Your tourniquet should be tight enough to temporarily stop blood from leaving the arm but, if you apply it too tightly, you will also block the blood flow into the arm and the vein will not dilate. This defeats the purpose of using a tourniquet in the first place.

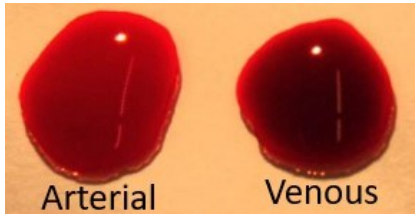


Tourniquet is so tight that it blocks arteries as well as veins, causing less blood pressure in the veins, making them harder to find.



Tourniquet is firm enough to block blood flow in veins but not arteries

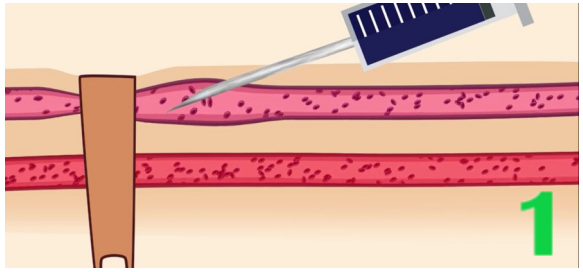
Watch out for arteries



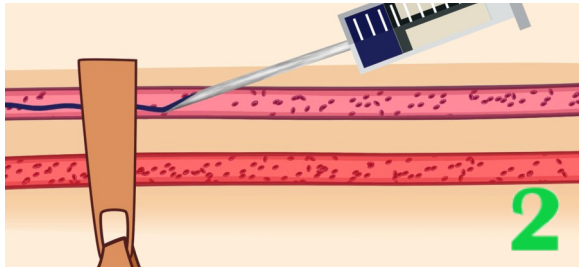
If you happen to hit upon an artery by mistake, you will know: if the blood is frothy, if the shot hurts or if the blood is bright red and oxygenated (instead of dark red like venous blood) and gushes or pulses into the syringe. Do not continue the shot. It could lead to thrombosis of the artery or a serious infection. Only inject into veins.

Tourniquet tips...

1. Place the tourniquet high above where you're trying to inject, and tighten it gently.
2. Be patient; give your veins a minute to fill up with blood and dilate.
3. Once the needle is in the vein, release the tourniquet. If you push the plunger before releasing the tourniquet, the shot may burst the vein or cause backflow into the surrounding tissues.
4. If you place the tourniquet high on your arm with the release clip facing inward, you can simply press the clip between your arm and the side of your body to release it with ease.



Release the tourniquet now—As soon as the needle is in the vein.



Before pressing the plunger the tourniquet should be loose to allow the fluid from the syringe a clear passage through the vein.