## HOW TO PREVENT IT

**Wash your hands first:** If you don't have running water, you can use hand sanitiser, or wipe your fingers with a swab to clean them.

**Use sterile equipment:** For every injection if possible. That means a brand new needle AND barrel AND filter that you unseal from the packet at the time of use.

**Clean the space where you're mixing up:** If you can't wipe it down, use the paper bag or the box your equipment came in as a work surface. Don't forget to swab your spoon as well.

**Use a wheel filter if you are injecting pills.**

**Swab your site before injecting:** This will get rid of most bacteria on your skin which greatly lowers the chance of any of it ending up inside you.

**Contamination:** Touching, licking, blowing on your equipment, or running it through a flame will add dirt and bacteria.

**Avoid injecting around sores:** Injecting into abscesses or infections can cause dirt and bacteria to spread throughout your body.

### FIND US IN PERTH:

**Suite 22 / 7 Aberdeen St**

**Phone: (08) 9325 8387**

Mon - Fri: 10am to 5pm

Sat - Sun: 1pm to 4pm

Closed on pubic holidays!

PERTH MAP

### FIND US IN BUNBURY:

**97 Spencer Street**

**Phone: (08) 9791 6699**

Mon - Fri: 10am to 3pm

Sat - Sun: closed

Closed on public holidays!

BUNBURY MAP

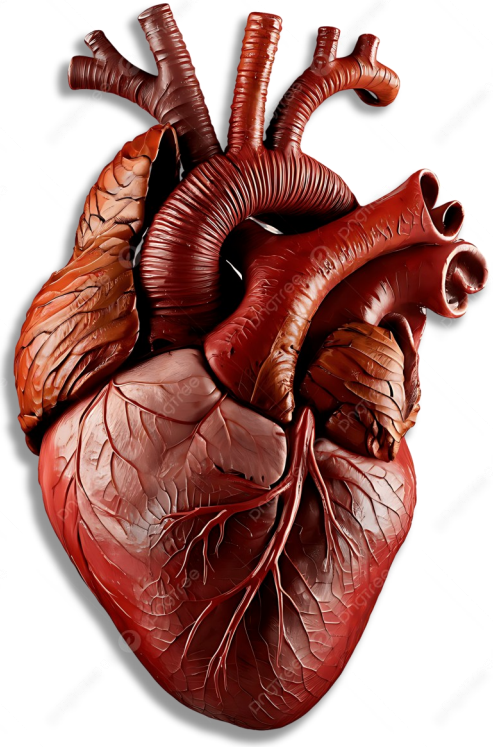
## PBHR WA HEALTH CLINICS

PBHR WA's health clinics are free to access and no appointment is necessary.

Just call us beforehand on the day and ask if our Nurse will be available.

peer based harm reduction wa

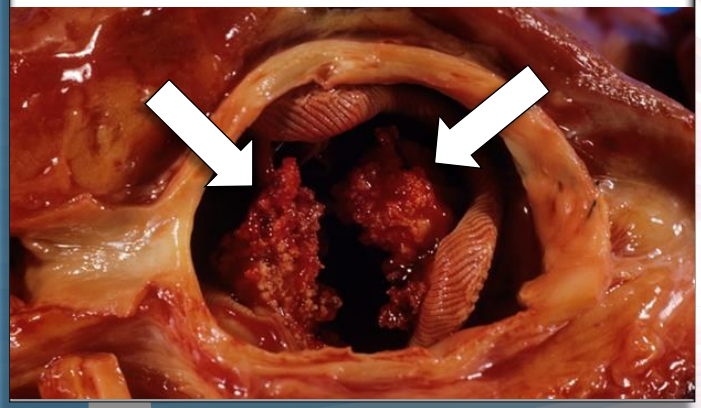
# ENDOCARDITIS FACTS & PREVENTION



www.harmreductionwa.org

## WHAT IS ENDOCARDITIS?

Endocarditis happens when germs (usually bacteria) get into your bloodstream and travel to your heart. They stick to the heart valves or the lining of the heart and start to grow. This causes inflammation and can create "growths" of bacteria on your heart valves.



## HOW DO YOU GET IT?

For people who inject, bacteria usually get into the blood in three ways:

**Skin Bacteria:** Bacteria that live naturally on your skin can be pushed into your vein by a needle.

**Reusing Equipment:** Reusing needles, syringes, filters, or spoons introduces germs directly into your body.

**Contaminated Water:** Using nonsterile or "old" water to mix drugs can carry bacteria into your bloodstream.

## WHY IS IT DANGEROUS?

Without treatment, endocarditis is often fatal.

**Heart Damage:** The infection can destroy your heart valves.

**Organ Failure:** Pieces of the bacterial growth can break off and travel to other parts of your body, causing strokes or damaging your lungs, kidneys, and brain.

## TREATMENT

Treatment for endocarditis involves a long course of medicine and, in some cases, surgery.

The main treatment is powerful **intravenous antibiotics.** You may need to stay in hospital for several weeks to make sure the infection has completely gone. Doctors will take regular blood tests to monitor the infection and whether treatment is working.

Sometimes, medicine alone isn't enough.

**Surgery may be needed if:**

**Heart Damage:** The infection has badly damaged your heart valves, and they need to be repaired or replaced.

**Stubborn Infection:** The bacteria are very strong and aren't clearing up with antibiotics.

**Blood Clots:** Large growths of bacteria on the heart valves are at risk of breaking off

## TWO TYPES

Endocarditis can be grouped into two types based on how fast the infection moves.

### ACUTE

This is the "fast-moving" version that attacks the heart suddenly.

**How it feels:** You get very sick very quickly. You might have a sudden high fever, chills, and a racing heart.

**The danger:** It can damage healthy heart valves in just a few days.

**What it means:** This is a major medical emergency that requires immediate hospital treatment.

### SUBACUTE

This is the "slow-moving" version. It can take weeks or even months to cause serious trouble.

**How it feels:** The symptoms are mild at first and can feel like a lingering flu that won't go away. You might feel run down, have a low fever, lose your appetite, or have night sweats.

**The danger:** Because it's slow, people often wait too long to see a doctor. Over time, the infection still causes significant scarring and damage to the heart valves.

**What it means:** Even though it feels less "urgent" than the acute type, it is still life-threatening if left untreated.