

## DONT'S

### Don't share works.

Dirty rigs can contain HIV (the virus that causes AIDS), Hepatitis, and other infections.

If you have to share, clean them every time before you use them -- see inside for more info.

### Don't use your works more than once.

Old rigs can be contaminated with bacteria, viruses, and other nasties if they're not cleaned properly.

Also, every time you use a needle it gets blunted. Over time it can get barbs, which cause infection and also hurts more.

### Don't be a tough guy about OD'ing.

If you're using after a bit of a break (when your tolerance is gone), or for any reason you're unsure how strong the stuff you bought is, do 1/2 your regular amount first as a tester. You can always do more.

Many OD's are caused by mixing - eg. booze + heroin - so mix as little as possible.

Fix where there's people around to find you, so there's help if you go down.

If someone does OD (stops breathing, looks blue, is unconscious), call 911 right away. Walking them around, splashing their face with cold water, etc. will NOT keep someone alive if they've OD'd.

While you're waiting for the ambulance, turn the person on their side so they won't choke if they puke.

Don't be a tough guy -- stay alive.

## DO'S

### Do have your own works.

You can get rigs from SOS or a drugstore. Or if you're a hooker, you can get them from the PEERS outreach workers on the stroll.

At SOS there's a list of drugstores that sell rigs without a prescription. Rigs at the needle exchange are free; at drugstores they're under 50 cents each.

### Do know where you're shooting.

If you keep going into the same spot, your vein can scar and collapse. Change your sites to give the veins you've been using a chance to heal up.

If you're muscling or skin-popping, know how to do it (what size rig to use, where is safe, etc). If you're not sure, ask the staff at S.O.S. or one of the street nurses to show you where it's safe to shoot.

### Do have your own cooker & water.

Other people's cookers & water can contain infections they might be carrying (HIV, Hep, etc).

### Do use the smallest needle you can.

This lessens the risk of damage, inflammation, and infection (and will hurt as little as possible!).

### Do clean your hands & your skin.

If you can, wash your hands with soap & water before you set everything up. If you can't wash up, use an alcohol swab to wipe your hands.

Always use an alcohol swab to wipe your injection site before you shoot.


# SAFER NEEDLE USE



## Using Tips #1 General info

QUESTIONS? COME TALK TO US AT S.O.S.,  
1220 COMMERCIAL ALLEY (BEHIND PIZZA HUT  
ON YATES ST.), OR CALL US AT 384-1345.

This pamphlet is produced by AIDS Vancouver Island's Street  
Outreach Services, with info from the Inner South Community  
Health Services AIDS Prevention Team, Australia.

 AIDS Vancouver Island

## HOW TO PREVENT AN INFECTION

You can greatly reduce your chances of developing an infection by cleaning the injection site with an alcohol swab before you shoot up. If you don't clean your skin, your rig carries bacteria from the surface of your skin (where they are harmless) to deeper layers of your skin/fat/muscle or blood, causing infection.

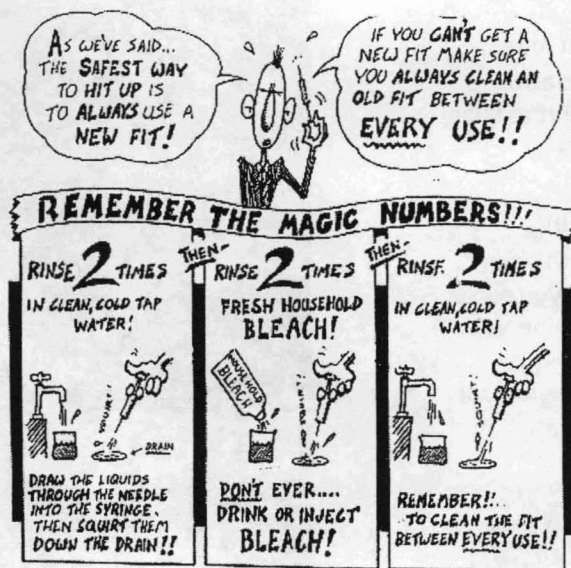
Use clean water, and filter your dope to prevent impurities being carried into your body.

You can get an abscess from missing your vein. When you don't hit the vein, your shot is injected into the skin tissue, sits there, and develops into an infection. To prevent this type of abscess, make sure that you flag (draw back on the plunger) before you inject. If blood appears in the barrel, you know that the needle is in the vein -- yippee!

Lastly, before you use your cooker, use a clean cigarette filter or a tampon soaked in bleach to clean it.

### Cleaning your rigs

The best rig is a new rig, because points dull really quickly -- which makes it hurt more and can lead to infections. However, if all you've got is an old rig, here's how to clean it to avoid infecting yourself with whatever viruses or bacteria were in the old syringe.



# INFECTIONS

## BACTERIAL INFECTIONS

You can get bacterial infections in your skin, in fat under the skin, in the tissue that connects fat and muscle, in your heart, in your lungs, or in your blood.

Symptoms of a bacterial infection are:

- ☞ feeling hot all over, in one limb, in a vein, or in an injection site; also sweating, especially at night
- ☞ feeling cold, or alternating chills & fever
- ☞ pain in a vein, a limb, your chest, or skin
- ☞ a hard lump (abscess) near an injection site - it might be red, feel hot, or have pus in it
- ☞ dizziness, puking, being really out of it (delirium), exhaustion
- ☞ ringing in your ears, or blurry vision (seeing spots)
- ☞ a red line, going from the place that is infected toward your heart
- ☞ a cough that doesn't go away, or that gets worse; difficulty breathing

If you think you might have an infection, seek medical help immediately. A tiny infection can very quickly get out of hand -- and infections can kill you.

## HEPATITIS INFECTIONS

Hepatitis is an infection in the liver. There are different types of Hepatitis, named by letters of the alphabet (Hepatitis A, B, C, etc).

Hep A is transmitted through spit and shit. Symptoms are: yellow skin/eyes, fever, loss of appetite, brown piss, and a general flu-like feeling. Help prevent Hep A by cleaning your

fingers with bleach/alcohol wipes after you use and before you touch your dope. Suitcasing (using a condom) can prevent you from contaminating your dope; use gloves to pull your dope out of the latex, & then get rid of the gloves before touching your dope. Sharing smoke is unsafe.

Hep B and C are more dangerous than Hep A because they can continue to damage your liver over the years. Symptoms of Hep B/C can be similar to Hep A, or you can not have symptoms for many years and then start feeling tired all the time, pain under your ribs, or digestive problems.

Hep B is transmitted through sexual fluids & blood. Hep C is transmitted mostly through blood with minor risk of infection from sexual fluids. To avoid getting Hep through sex, use condoms, give BJs or for fucking, and cut a condom in half to put between your mouth and the other person if you're eating someone out.

To avoid contaminated blood, don't share your rigs, or clean them thoroughly if you are sharing (see the picture to the left). Also don't share anything that could have blood on it, like tampons, needles, dental floss, razors, or toothbrushes.

There are vaccines for Hep A and B, available through the street nurses at SOS. The nurses do blood tests for Hep A, B, and C.

## HIV/AIDS INFECTION

USED NEEDLES



SPREAD

HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, is transmitted through sexual fluids & blood -- so you can get HIV from contaminated dope, water, filters, cookers, or needles, or from exchange of infected fluids during unprotected sex. Avoid HIV by following the info on Hep prevention above -- clean rigs & equipment, and do safer sex.

The street nurses can give you a blood test to see if you are infected. There is no vaccine