

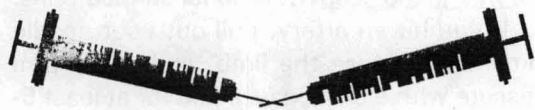
SKIN POPPING

Skin popping is injecting drugs between your skin and fat layers. You can do it on the skin of your forearms, thighs or legs; it is not safe to use your breasts, abdomen, or neck.


If you skin pop street drugs, sooner or later you will get an abscess, but it's safer than trying to get one of the big, deep veins.

How to skin pop

- 1) Wash your hands with soap & water, or wipe your fingers with alcohol. Clean the spot you're going to shoot into with an alcohol swab.
- 2) Get comfortable so you can inject without moving the area you're shooting into.
- 3) Slide the needle under your skin at a shallow angle.
- 4) Inject no more than it takes to make a little bubble under the skin (25 units, or 1/4 of a cc); if your hit is more than 1/4cc doses, then inject 1/4cc doses into different sites.
- 5) Pull the needle out and stash it somewhere safe, for returning it to SOS.
- 6) Clean your hands with an alcohol swab or soap and water, and gently massage the skin to help the dope absorb.



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**

MUSCLING

Muscling means shooting your dope into a muscle. The whole point is to inject into muscle, so don't shoot somewhere where you can't feel muscle. The fleshy part on the outsides of your thighs or your upper arms are best.



Make sure you're using a point that is long & thick enough -- the rigs for mainlining are too short & thin. You need to pierce both skin and fat to get to muscle, which means a longer needle (1 1/2 inches, instead of the 1/2 inch ones used for veins). It needs to be thick because thin needles can break off in your muscle.

A 22x1 1/2 point is a good size. For steroids, use a 18g point to draw out of the vial, then put a 22g point on to shoot it.

How to muscle

- 1) Get your arm/leg comfortable, straight, & relaxed. The more tense your muscle is, the more it will hurt to shoot into it.
- 2) Clean your fingers & site with an alcohol swab.
- 3) Stick the needle into your leg/arm in one quick stab, pushing the needle in almost all the way.
- 4) Since you are shooting into muscle, you don't want to be in a vein. Check by drawing back on the plunger. If blood appears in the barrel, you're in a vein. Pull back a bit and flag again; if no blood appears, you're in a good spot.
- 5) Push the plunger down slowly.
- 6) Pull the needle out and put it somewhere safe, so you'll remember to bring it back to SOS.
- 7) Cover the hole with a cotton ball, and gently massage the skin to help the dope absorb.

*QUESTIONS? COME TALK TO US AT S.O.S.,
1220 COMMERCIAL ALLEY (BEHIND PIZZA HUT
ON YATES ST.), OR CALL US AT 364-1345.*

SAFER NEEDLE USE



Using Tips #3 How to shoot

VEINS

When you mainline, you want to be shooting into a vein that is close to the surface of your skin.

A good vein for injecting is one that feels like a small rubber tube under your skin. If you can't find a good vein right away, try:

- ☞ clenching & relaxing your fist
- ☞ gently rubbing/slapping the skin over your vein
- ☞ soak your arm in hot water, or wrap your arm in a towel soaked in warm water
- ☞ squeeze your bicep (upper arm) with your hand
- ☞ use a tourniquet -- the best ones are soft & thick, like surgical tubing/a tie/rope. The street nurses have comfy tourniquets. Belts aren't great, because they can give you a blood blister from the buckle.

Whatever you're using for a tie, don't pull it so tight that you stop blood getting into your vein -- that will make finding it even harder.

Men often find it easier than women to find veins. Your best vein will probably be on the arm that you write with (so if you're right-handed, look for veins on your right arm).

ARTERIES

NEVER shoot into an artery. Arteries take blood from your heart into the tiny blood vessels in your hands and feet.

If you shoot into them the impurities in your dope can clog up these tiny vessels -- which means you can end up losing your arm or your leg, or even dying. Plus the pressure in arteries is

really high, which means if you poke it the blood can squirt out and you can lose a lot of blood (& your dope).

You will know you have hit an artery if the blood is frothy when you flag (pull back the plunger), or if the plunger is forced back by the pressure of blood when you hit it.

A simple way to figure out if an artery is where you're shooting is to feel for a pulse before injecting.

MAINLINING

HOW TO INJECT INTO A VEIN

- 1) Wash your hands with soap & water, or wipe your fingers with alcohol. Clean the spot you're going to shoot into with an alcohol swab.
- 2) Make yourself comfortable so you can inject without moving the limb you're shooting into.
- 3) Insert the needle up into the skin at a 45° angle, the same direction as in the pictures below.



Veins take blood from the outer edges of your body back to your heart. Injecting against the flow can screw up the proper pressure that veins are made to take, and can damage the vein. So **aim for your heart**.

Then go up, and in to the vein.

- 4) Pull back the plunger - if it pulls blood into the syringe, you've hit a vein, yippee!

- 5) Remove your tourniquet. If you leave your tie on, you put too much pressure on the vein, which can make it burst -- causing leakage, waste of your dope, and bruising.
- 6) Inject *slowly*.
- 7) Remove the needle as soon as you have finished injecting and stash it somewhere safe, so you can bring it back to SOS.
- 8) Apply pressure to the site with a clean cotton ball/kleenex/toilet paper, to help stop any bleeding and help your vein recover. Do not wipe with alcohol after shooting -- the alcohol causes more scabbing and scarring.

If you're shooting into your arm, raise it above the level of your heart to reduce bruising, stop bleeding, and help your vein recover.

HINT FOR PREVENTING VEIN COLLAPSE:

To keep your veins in good shape, don't keep going back to the same spot -- or you'll end up collapsing your vein. The longer the rest veins get between injections, the longer they'll last. So switch sites as frequently as you can.

Where there is a pulse, an artery is underneath, so don't go too deep! Only go for surface veins.

If you hit an artery, pull out your needle immediately, raise the limb, and apply firm pressure with a clean gauze pad for at least 5-10 minutes. If you are bleeding a lot, or you're still bleeding after 5-10 minutes of pressure, call 911 immediately.