

TAKE CARE 
TAKE CHARGE

**Safety Tips for People
Who Use or Inject Drugs**

TIPS FOR SAFER USE

1



**DON'T SHARE OR
REUSE EQUIPMENT**

2



GET NEW SYRINGES

3



**PREPARE DRUGS
CAREFULLY**

4



**TAKE CARE
OF YOUR VEINS**

5



**PREVENT
OVERDOSE**

6



**GET TESTED
AND TREATED FOR HIV
AND HEPATITIS C**

7



**REVERSE
OVERDOSE**

8



GET HELP



DON'T SHARE OR REUSE EQUIPMENT

Hepatitis and HIV can spread between people who share drug use equipment. The hepatitis C virus can live on equipment for weeks, and can damage your liver if you don't get treated and cured. There is no cure for HIV, and treatment involves taking medicines every day. Protect yourself.

+ If you smoke or snort drugs, avoid sharing pipes or straws.

If you inject, always use new equipment:



Use a new syringe, rinse water, cooker, cotton and tie, every time.



If someone helps you inject, make sure he or she uses a new syringe.



Throw away used rinse water and old cottons.

If you must reuse a syringe, follow these steps:

1.



Draw **cold** water into your syringe and shake the barrel. Squirt out the water. Do not reuse this water.
Repeat.

2.



Draw **bleach** into your syringe and shake the barrel. Squirt out the bleach.
Repeat.

3.



Draw **new** cold water into your syringe and shake the barrel. Squirt out the water.
Repeat.



GET NEW SYRINGES

Where to get new syringes:

You can get free syringes and injection equipment anonymously from a syringe exchange program, or you can buy syringes at many pharmacies. Just ask the pharmacist.

Call 311 to find a syringe exchange program.

How to get rid of used syringes:

1.

Put used syringes and other equipment in **sharps containers** from your syringe exchange program. To avoid a needle stick, do not try to break the tip or recap the syringe.

2.

Drop off used syringes at a syringe exchange, syringe kiosk or medical clinic.



Until you get a sharps container, put used syringes in a thick plastic container, like a laundry soap bottle. Be sure to label it as hazardous waste.





PREPARE DRUGS CAREFULLY

- **Clean your hands with soap and water or a hand sanitizer.**
- **Place any equipment on a clean surface.**

If you inject:

- + Always use a clean, sterile syringe.
- + Use fresh tap water or sterile water tubes (from a syringe exchange program).
- + Don't use your needle to poke a hole in your sterile water tube. This can make your needle blunt. A blunt needle can damage your skin and veins.
- + Draw water into your syringe from a clean container.
- + Use a new cooker every time, and avoid touching the inside of the cooker.
- + Drop the cotton directly into the cooker, and then leave it alone. Don't touch it with your hands!
- + If you share drugs, use one syringe to split the drugs, and a second syringe to inject yourself.





TAKE CARE OF YOUR VEINS IF YOU INJECT

Injecting correctly helps you avoid infections and collapsed veins. Follow these steps:

1.



Wipe your skin in one direction with alcohol or an antiseptic wipe. Allow it to dry.

2.



Find the vein before you shoot. To make your veins visible, tie off your arm above the point of injection.

3.



Point the needle toward the heart when injecting.

4.



Don't dig for veins. When you've found a vein, blood should appear in the barrel of the syringe after pulling back slightly on the plunger. If blood doesn't appear, pull out and try again.

5.



Rotate injection sites to reduce damage to your skin and veins.



Injecting into your arms and legs is safer than injecting into hands, feet, neck or groin.

5 **OD** PREVENT OVERDOSE



Avoid using alone.

If you overdose, you want someone around to help.



Know your limits.

Do a test shot to see how strong the drugs are. If you haven't used in a while, you are more likely to overdose. Use less than usual.



Avoid mixing drugs.

Most overdoses happen when people mix heroin or painkillers with other drugs like benzos, methadone, anti-depressants or alcohol.



Carry an overdose rescue kit.

Kits contain naloxone, a medication that reverses overdoses caused by heroin, prescription painkillers, methadone or other opioids if given in time.

Call 311 to find out where you can get a free kit and training on how to use it.



GET TESTED AND TREATED FOR HIV AND HEPATITIS C

Anyone who has ever injected drugs should get tested for HIV and Hepatitis C (Hep C).



Get tested for HIV every six months if you inject drugs, share works or have sex without condoms.

If you have HIV, get treated.

HIV medicines can keep you healthy and reduce the chance of passing HIV to others.

- + **If you think you may have been exposed to HIV, get PEP** — Post-Exposure Prophylaxis — emergency medication that can stop HIV if started within 36 hours.
- + **If you're worried about getting HIV, ask a doctor about PrEP** — Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis — medication that helps you stay HIV-negative.

**CALL 311 OR TEXT TESTNYC TO 877877
FOR MORE INFORMATION**



Get tested for Hep C every six months if you inject drugs or share works. **There is a cure for Hep C.**

There are two tests:

If you have ever tested positive for Hep C antibodies, you will need the Hep C RNA test to find out if you have Hep C now.

+ If you have Hep C, get treated and cured.

New treatments are shorter and have fewer side effects. Most people can be cured in two to three months with pills only.

+ You can get infected again.

If you share your drugs, use your own new works.

**CALL 311 OR TEXT LIVER TO 877877
FOR MORE INFORMATION**

SAFETY TIPS

7 **OD** REVERSE OVERDOSE

1. Watch out for any symptom that someone is overdosing.

- + Little to no breathing
- + Blue lips or skin color
- + Passing out

2. Call 911.

- + If you have drugs on you when you see someone overdose, don't be afraid to call 911.
- + Even if you were sharing drugs, you and the overdose victim will be protected from prosecution under New York's 911 Good Samaritan law. You may not be protected if you're on probation or parole.

3. Give naloxone if you have it.

- + With injectable naloxone: shoot it into the upper arm or thigh
- + With sprayable naloxone: use half in one nostril and half in the other

4. Do rescue breathing (mouth-to-mouth) if the person is not breathing.

- ↓ Tilt the person's head back
- ↓ Pinch his or her nose
- ↓ Give two quick breaths into the mouth
- ↓ Continue with one breath every five seconds until the person starts breathing

5. Lay the person on his or her side to prevent choking.





GET HELP

To stop or reduce your drug use: + **Ask a syringe exchange program**

about your options. Some syringe programs offer treatment, and most can refer you to someone who does.

+ **Talk to a doctor** about treatment or a referral. Buprenorphine and methadone are medicines that can help you manage opioid addiction.

+ **Get information** and referrals to drug treatment or 12-step programs. Visit **lifenet.nyc** or **call 311**.

Get help if you are depressed or anxious. + Depression or anxiety can make it harder to deal with drug use and with other illnesses, including HIV or hepatitis.

+ **Get treated.** Many options are available. Ask a doctor or visit **lifenet.nyc** for help.

Get regular medical care. + Seeing a doctor or nurse can help you stay healthy.

+ If you don't have health insurance, you may qualify for free or low-cost insurance. Even if you don't qualify for insurance, you can still get good health care, regardless of your immigration status or ability to pay.

+ For help finding a health care provider, call **311** or **visit nyc.gov/health** and search **"How to find a doctor."**

**If you use drugs,
take care and take charge of your safety.**

For support to stop using drugs and for other resources,
visit **lifenet.nyc** or **call 311**.
