

Take Care



Take Charge

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

Tips for Safer Use

1



Do not 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.



Do Not 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 damage your liver if you do not 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 they use a new syringe.



Throw away used rinse water and old cottons.

If you must reuse a syringe, follow all of 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 service program or buy syringes at local pharmacies. Just ask the pharmacist.

Call 311 or visit nyc.gov/alcoholanddrugs to find a syringe service program.

How to get rid of used syringes:

1.

Put used syringes and other equipment in **sharps containers** from your syringe service 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 service program, 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 possible, check your drugs using fentanyl test strips or other drug checking tools.**

If you inject:

- + Always use a clean, sterile syringe.
- + Use fresh tap water or sterile water tubes (from a syringe service program).
- + Do not 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, then leave it alone. Do not 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.



Do not dig for veins. When you have found a vein, you should see blood in the barrel of the syringe after pulling back slightly on the plunger. If you do not see blood, 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 your hands, feet, neck or groin.

5 **OD** Prevent Overdose

Drugs including heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine and pills from nonmedical sources may contain fentanyl. Fentanyl is a powerful opioid that cannot be detected by sight, taste or smell and increases the risk of overdose.

Follow the safety tips below to prevent overdose:



+ Test your drugs using fentanyl test strips.

If positive, consider not using. If you do plan to use, start with a small amount and go slowly. Visit **nyc.gov/health/fentanyl** to find out where to get fentanyl test strips.



+ Avoid using alone and take turns.

If you do use alone, call the Never Use Alone hotline at 800-484-3731.



+ Avoid mixing drugs, including alcohol.



+ Have naloxone ready and on hand.

Naloxone is a safe and easy-to-use medicine that reverses the effects of opioids such as heroin, painkillers and fentanyl. Call **311** to find out where you can get naloxone.



+ Take care if you have not used in a while.

Your tolerance may be lower, which makes you more likely to overdose.



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 greatly reduce the chance of passing HIV to others.

- + If you think you may have been exposed to HIV, get PEP** — post-exposure prophylaxis — which is an emergency medicine that can stop HIV if started within 36 but not beyond 72 hours.
- + If you are worried about getting HIV, ask a doctor about PrEP** — pre-exposure prophylaxis — which is a daily pill that helps you stay HIV-negative.

For HIV testing, treatment and prevention services, call 311 or visit nyc.gov/health/hiv.



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 short and have few 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.

For Hep C testing, treatment and prevention services, call 311 or visit nyc.gov/health/hepc.

7 Reverse Overdose

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

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

2. Call 911.

- + If you think someone you are with is overdosing, call 911. The law provides protection to someone overdosing or anyone calling 911 to save a life, even if drugs are present, with some exceptions. For example, you may not be protected from arrest if you have a warrant, or are on probation or parole. For more information on the law and exceptions, visit **health.ny.gov** and search for **Good Samaritan Law**.

3. Give naloxone if you have it.

- + Spray nasal naloxone into the nostril.
- + Inject intramuscular naloxone into the upper arm or thigh.
- + If there is no response in two minutes, give a second dose.

4. If the person is not breathing, perform rescue breathing or CPR, if you know how.

- + Tilt the person's head back.

- + Pinch their nose.

- + Blow two quick breaths into their mouth.

- + Continue with **one** breath every **five** seconds until the person starts breathing.

5. Lay the person on their side to prevent choking.





Get Help

- To stop or reduce your drug use:**
- + **Ask a syringe service program** about your options. Some syringe programs offer treatment, and most can refer you to someone who does.
 - + **Talk to your health care provider** about treatment or a referral. Buprenorphine (bupe) and methadone are medicines that can help you manage opioid addiction.
 - + For information, support and connection to services, call **888-NYC-Well** (888-692-9355), text **WELL** to **65173** or visit **nyc.gov/nycwell**.

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- 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 health care provider or visit **nyc.gov/nycwell** for help.

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- Get regular medical care.**
- + Seeing a health care provider can help you stay healthy.
 - + If you do not have health insurance, you may qualify for free or low-cost insurance. Even if you do not 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 for **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,
call **888-NYC-Well** (888-692-9355),
text **WELL** to **65173** or visit **nyc.gov/nycwell**.

