



The Juice

Injecting safely

If you inject steroids, it is important to know how to do it safely. This can help stop infections, injuries, and the spread of blood-borne viruses (BBVs) like hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV. This guide explains how to use new equipment, prepare your space, inject in the right spot, and clean up afterwards. You can also get help from a Needle and Syringe Program.

INJECTING SAFELY

Always use new, sterile equipment. Re-using or sharing equipment increases the risk of contamination, bacterial infections, injection site damage, and transmission of blood borne viruses (BBVs) such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV.

You can get new injecting equipment and sharps containers from Needle and Syringe Programs (NSPs). Some gyms may also have sharps bins. Any hard plastic container can be used as a temporary sharps container, including protein powder containers, ice cream containers and laundry detergent containers. It must be disposed of in a community sharps bin. Everything is incinerated after collection.

It is safest to only inject yourself. If you are unable to, the person injecting you should wear gloves and never recap the needle. Place it straight in the sharps bin. Be aware of others around you to prevent accidental injury.

You will need a needle that is long enough to reach your muscle and thick enough for the drug to pass through. You should use a large needle (e.g. 19G or 21G or 23G) to draw up the drug and a new 23G needle to inject the drug. Make sure the needle length is 1-1.5 inches (2.5 – 4cm).

NSP workers are able to provide advice on injecting equipment if you would like to discuss it further.

CREATING A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT



Have your sharps disposal container ready before you start injecting.



Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before setting up.



If possible, it is best to inject in a private space by yourself to reduce the risk of blood contamination. Choose a hard surface (bench or table) that can easily be wiped down. You can use soapy water or alcohol swabs to wipe it down.



Before injecting, wash the injection site with soap and water if you can. This is better than using an alcohol swab, though you should use a swab if you cannot wash the site immediately before injecting it. Use one swab in one direction only so you are not wiping dirt or bacteria around and allow it to dry before injecting.

DAMAGE AT INJECTING SITE

Steroid injections are generally injected intramuscularly (into the muscles). Injecting in the wrong spot can hit a nerve, cause bleeding, and in rare cases, lead to lasting damage or paralysis. Injecting steroids into veins carries serious health risks and can result in death.

Make sure you understand where it is safe to inject. You can ask for more information at a primary Needle and Syringe Program (NSP).

BELOW ARE AREAS OF YOUR BODY WHERE YOU CAN SAFELY INJECT:



1 Top outer quadrant of glute muscle.

2 Outside quad muscle.

3 Deltoid muscle of arm.

BLOOD MANAGEMENT

There is often a bit of bleeding when you remove the needle after injecting. While there is no harm in touching your own blood, it is important to clean up your blood and ensure no one else comes in contact with it. Even tiny, invisible amounts of blood can carry blood borne viruses. This is also why injecting others can increase the risk of transmitting a blood borne virus.

If you see blood after injecting, apply pressure with a clean tissue or cotton wool for a few minutes. Any swelling, redness or itching should quickly subside. If it doesn't, seek medical help. Avoid putting an alcohol swab on the area after injecting.

Everything you have used in the injection – needles, syringes, swabs and empty ampoules or vials should be placed in the sharps disposal container and returned to an NSP for safe disposal.

Wash your hands and the injection area on your body with soap and water. Clean any surfaces your equipment or blood may have touched using soapy water or alcohol swabs.

If you think you could have come into contact with someone else's blood in the past, ask a doctor to test for BBVs. You can look and feel healthy even if you have a BBV. Symptoms often take years to show, but the virus may already be harming your body during that time.

For more information or to find support services visit thejuice.org.au



References

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