

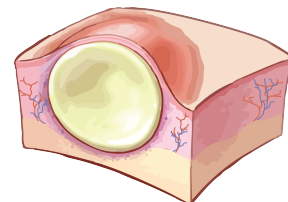
# Protect yourself from bacterial infections related to injection drug use

Bacteria or other microbes can come from your skin, unclean water or other liquids used to dissolve drugs, cottons or filters that aren't clean, or the drugs themselves.

## Common injection-related bacterial and fungal infections include:

### Skin and soft tissue infections, including abscesses

Cellulitis and abscesses of the skin begin with redness, swelling, and tenderness at an injection site and can develop into a pus-filled pocket. These can lead to more severe infections listed below if not treated.



### Bacteria in the blood (bacteremia)

Bacteremia is when bacteria enter the blood stream. It can happen from injecting with non-sterile equipment, skin that has not been cleaned with alcohol, or from minor infections that get worse. Without timely treatment, it can rapidly lead to sepsis, tissue damage, organ failure, and death.

### Bone, joint, and spine infections

Infections of the bone and spine (osteomyelitis) and joints (septic arthritis) are typically caused by bacteremia. They develop quickly and are very painful, causing joint swelling, fever, and stiffness.

### Endocarditis

Endocarditis is an infection of the heart or heart valves and can be very serious, sometimes deadly. It can lead to strokes, heart failure, and lung, liver, and kidney problems. Symptoms include fever, muscle aches, shortness of breath, and sometimes rash.

## How can I prevent these infections?

- Avoid using injection equipment (syringes, cookers, cottons, filters, tourniquets, water) that has been used by someone else or that are not clean and sterilized.
- Use STERILE needles and syringes from your local pharmacy or syringe service program.
- Follow proper injection technique (described on the back) and clean skin first with soap and water and then alcohol wipes.
- Seek treatment for skin infections at a clinic or emergency room. Do not try to drain abscesses yourself.
- These infections may only respond to certain types of antibiotics. Do not try to treat yourself with antibiotics from home or friends. Using the wrong treatment and delaying getting the right treatment could make it worse.

## Find a Syringe Service Program near you.

Kentucky currently has more than 75 operating syringe service programs located throughout the state. Learn more about program locations and hours by scanning the QR code.

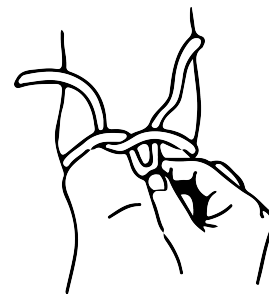


## Preparing to inject

Use a clean syringe, cooker, cotton, and water. If you have **no other option** but to re-use your or someone else's old syringe or cooker, clean it using water and diluted bleach. Shake the bleach solution around in it and let it sit for 2 minutes. Cleaning it will help but it won't kill all germs and viruses. Using Q-tip cotton to filter is safest; cigarette filters and tampons can contain chemicals and/or small pieces of glass. Do not re-use your cottons; it can cause an infection (i.e. 'cotton fever'). Use clean water to dissolve your drugs; do not use lemon juice.

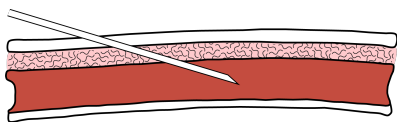
## Tying off

Elastic tourniquets should be used to make veins more accessible. A slip-knot (see figure) is ideal so it can be removed quickly if necessary. Remove the tourniquet once you see blood in the syringe.



## Correct needle insertion

Needles should be inserted at a 15° to 35° angle with the bevel opening facing up (see figure). Always insert in the direction of the heart. You've hit a vein when dark red blood moves slowly into the syringe after pulling back the plunger. Avoid hitting an artery, never inject where you feel a pulse and don't go too deep.



## After injecting

Pull the needle out at the same angle it went in. Clean the site and any sites where you missed the vein with an antiseptic wipe or soap and clean water. If you notice a lump, you may have an abscess. Don't drain it yourself; go to a clinic. If you get fever, chills, pain, or a dark line near the lump, get to a clinic quickly because you could have a blood infection.

## Safest injection location

The arm is the safest site for injecting (see figure for best choices). Be sure to **clean the injection site** with alcohol pads, soap and water, or hydrogen peroxide. Routine cleaning will reduce your risk of endocarditis. Also, rotate your injection sites to avoid a vein collapse. Remember, having caffeine or nicotine before you inject can make it harder to hit veins.

