SAFER INJECTING
Supplies used for **injecting drugs**

- Needles, syringes, tourniquets, alcohol swabs, dry swabs

Supplies used for **drug preparation**

- BZK wipes, sterile water, cookers, and filters (vitamin C - optional)

Drug-injecting equipment should not be shared. This includes syringes, needles, cookers, filters, sterile water, alcohol swabs, dry swabs and tourniquets.

The smallest traces of blood can remain on used injection equipment, and if shared, can transmit infections like HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

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**Sample of 1 (single) Use Safer Injecting Kit**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supply</th>
<th>Single Kit</th>
<th>3 Needle Kit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Needle and syringe</td>
<td>1 fixed needle to a syringe OR 1 needle tip + 1 barrel = 1 unit</td>
<td>3 fixed needles to syringes OR 3 needle tips + 3 barrels = 3 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooker</td>
<td>1 Stericup OR 1 One-Use Cooker OR 1 Spoon = 1 unit</td>
<td>3 Stericups OR 3 One-Use Cookers OR 3 Spoons = 3 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sterile water</td>
<td>1 sterile water ampoule = 1 unit</td>
<td>3 sterile water ampoules = 3 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filter</td>
<td>1 blister pack of 5 filters = 1 unit</td>
<td>If you are distributing Stericup or One-Use Cookers, there is one filter in each package. The Spoon cooker does not include a filter, so filter blister packs will be needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourniquet</td>
<td>1 tourniquet = 1 unit</td>
<td>A kit of 3 is intended for one person to use, so 1-2 tourniquets should be enough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol swab</td>
<td>2 alcohol swabs = 2 units</td>
<td>6 alcohol swabs = 6 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry swab</td>
<td>Available in the Stericup and One-Use Cooker packages</td>
<td>Available in the Stericup and One-Use Cooker packages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Only include if crack or brown/black tar heroin are common in your community**

| Vitamin C               | 1 sachet = 1 unit                               | 3 sachets = 3 units                            |

*Use the above table to determine amounts for large size kits*
Advice about safer injecting is based on the best practice recommendations. For a number of reasons, following best practices can be a challenge. It is important to stay as close to the best practices as possible. Injecting drugs comes with health risks, but using safer practices can help reduce the risks.
Encourage people to:

- **Use sterile supplies for every injection.**
- **Avoid sharing injection equipment.** Blood residue can remain on used supplies making it easier to transmit HIV, hepatitis B and C.
- **Prepare and inject their own drugs if possible.**
- **Use only sterile supplies** if assisting someone, and be careful not to touch any blood.
- **Never inject into arteries.** It’s very dangerous to inject into arteries. Blood is under high pressure. If an artery is punctured, it can cause extreme bleeding that is so fast it will not allow time for a clot to form to stop the bleeding.
- **Never inject into arteries.** It’s very dangerous to inject into arteries. Blood is under high pressure. If you hit an artery, the blood will force the plunger back and the blood you draw will be a bright red colour. If punctured it can cause extreme bleeding that is so fast it will not allow time for a clot to form to stop the bleeding.
- **Allow injection sites to heal.** Rotate sites and avoid using the same spot repeatedly. Every injection causes damage to the vein wall. If the same spot is used for injecting, a scar can form that can collapse the vein. Damaged or swollen veins may partly recover, but collapsed veins never will.
- **Split drugs before preparing an injection.** If splitting drugs with another person, divide them using a new sterile syringe.
Bacteria and other microorganisms can enter the body during injection. They enter the bloodstream through veins causing infection and other health complications. Plan ahead to lower risk by keeping the prep and injection space clean.

Encourage people to:

- When possible, find a safe place that is clean, well-lit and where time can be taken to inject. People are more likely to apply safer practices and not miss their injection when they are not in a rush.

- Always wash hands with soap and water before handling harm reduction supplies. If soap and water are not available, use BZK wipes or alcohol swabs. Risk of infection is reduced by removing bacteria, viruses and dirt from hands.

- Always clean preparation surface with soap and water, BZK wipes, or alcohol swabs. Surfaces not cleaned can contaminate injection equipment.

- Put all equipment needed for injecting on a cleaned surface and have all supplies needed within reach.

- Plan and prepare for overdose, carry naloxone. When possible, avoid using alone, do a test hit, use smaller amounts, and go slowly.
It is easy to introduce bacteria and other microorganisms to equipment. Not all drugs are prepared the same way. Know the safest practices for drug injection to reduce possible harms.

**Encourage people to:**

- Use sterile cookers to prepare drugs.
- Add sterile water from a new unopened ampoule and use the blunt end of a sterile syringe to dissolve and mix the solution. Always heat drug solution to a boil. Allow to cool.
- Use a new filter when preparing drugs for injection. It filters out large particles from fillers and cutting agents. The filter can reduce the risk of them being injected into the bloodstream.
- Use a new sterile syringe and needle for every injection. This will minimize risk of infection.
- Avoid injecting multiple times using the same needle and syringe. Needles are sensitive and can become barbed or bent even after one injection. Barbed and bent needles can cause serious damage to the veins.
- Draw up the drug solution by gently laying the hole of the needle (bevel down) on the flat end of the filter.
- Remove air bubbles from the drug solution in the syringe. Air bubbles injected into the bloodstream can cause a blockage of blood vessels, known as an air embolism. Point the syringe upwards and lightly tap the sides. This makes the air bubbles rise to the top. Push the plunger slowly to push the bubbles through the needle. Do this until no more air bubbles are in the syringe.
Injecting drugs carries high risk of overdose, infections and damage to veins. Contaminated equipment can pass on viruses, bacteria and other micro-organisms that cause infections and diseases. Improper injection techniques can lead to vascular and tissue damage.

**Recommended practices to DECREASE HEALTH RISKS from injecting drugs:**

1. Put the fine drug powder in a new sterile single use cooker. If drugs need to be crushed first, try crushing them using a sterile tool (blunt end of the syringe, two cookers or a pill crusher). The finer the particles in the powder, the easier they will dissolve in water.

2. Always use sterile water from an unopened ampoule to add to the cooker. Stir the solution with the top of the plunger of a sterile syringe.

3. Heat the drug solution to a boil. Let it cool before injecting.

4. Add a new sterile filter to the drug solution. Filtering can remove large particles that did not dissolve. These large particles are usually fillers that have been added to the drug. This can also include wax coating found in some pills.

5. Insert the needle into the flat end of the filter. Take care not to push it all the way through the bottom, or the sides. The needle hole should face down. Slowly draw the solution up.

6. Find a good vein (veins in the arm are always the first choice).

7. If unable to find a good vein use a tourniquet. Pump the vein by clenching and unclenching the fist. Veins will look fatter and will be easier to find.

8. Slowly insert the needle into the vein at a shallow angle with the needle hole facing up and always pointing toward the heart.

9. Pull the plunger until you see blood appear (flagging). If no blood can be seen in the barrel of the syringe, remove the needle and try again.

10. Once blood appears in the syringe, untie the tourniquet.

11. Once the tourniquet is untied, press the plunger.

12. Inject slowly.

13. Use the post injection dry swab currently found in the One-Use and Stericup cooker packages to stop bleeding from the injection site. Hold firm pressure for at least 30 seconds.
Injecting drugs carries risk. Knowing the safest areas of the body to inject can reduce:

- infection
- hitting an artery or nerve
- causing vein damage

**Use Arms**
Veins close to the skin surface, found in the upper and lower arm, are the safest sites for injecting. Rotating veins regularly will ensure they stay in good shape.

**Use Hands**
Hands are less safe than arms because the veins are much smaller. The smaller veins can easily become damaged or bruised. Healing takes longer because circulation is slower. If injecting in hands, the thinnest needle is safest.

**Use Legs Cautiously**
Blood circulation in the legs is slower than in hands. Legs are the highest risk area for developing blood clots. Clots can break off and block blood vessels in the heart and lungs. Veins in legs are more difficult to find than in hands, especially ones behind the knee. Injecting in the area behind the knee can lead to accidentally hitting an artery.

**Use Feet Cautiously**
Veins in the feet are much smaller than other parts of the legs. These smaller veins easily become damaged and take longer to recover. Because veins in the feet are close to nerves, cartilage and tendons, any infection can be serious.

**Avoid Head and Neck**
The jugular vein is the riskiest place to inject. The vein lies very close to the carotid artery which brings blood to the brain. Hitting the carotid artery by accident would cause severe bleeding and could be fatal. Abscesses in this area could be very dangerous.

**Avoid Wrists**
Nerves, veins and arteries are very close together in the wrists. If bacteria is present during injection, it can cause bone, joint, tendon and soft tissue infection. Injecting in the wrists is dangerous and should be avoided.

**Avoid the Groin Area**
The femoral vein in the groin is large but can’t be seen. It lies close to the femoral nerve and artery and it’s easy to accidentally hit them instead. Hitting the artery can cause severe bleeding and infection and can lead to losing a limb. Hitting the nerve can cause severe pain and lead to nerve damage.

**Never inject into the genitals**
The genitals are delicate and injecting in this area can:

- easily damage small blood vessels
- lead to blood clots
- cause serious infections that can lead to flesh eating disease
### Tips on Vein Care

- Taking care of veins in the arms, hands and other safe areas will help them stay healthy longer. If veins are kept healthy it can keep people from injecting in more dangerous sites.
- When looking for a vein, take time to find the best site to inject. Rely on sight and touch.
- A tourniquet can make veins more visible and easier to access.
- Rotating injection sites gives veins time to heal before being used again. Just because a certain spot might be the quickest site, it should not be overused. Rotating sites is the key to healthier and longer lasting veins.
- Staying hydrated and injecting in a warm place can make it easier to find a vein and avoid missing an injection.
- Injecting in swollen, inflamed (red) or painful veins should be avoided until they heal.
- Always use sterile equipment for each injection.
- Bacteria collects on the palms, between fingers and under nails. Washing hands as often as possible will reduce the risk of infection. It is important to remind individuals to wash their hands before handling harm reduction supplies.
- Using the thinnest needle will cause the least damage to the veins.
- Always insert the needle pointing in the direction of the heart.
- Always inject into veins and never into arteries.

### Main differences between **Veins** and **Arteries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Veins</strong></th>
<th><strong>Arteries</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veins carry blood to the heart from extremities, neck and head</td>
<td>Arteries carry blood from the heart to all the other parts of the body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veins have no pulse</td>
<td>Arteries have a pulse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood is dark red</td>
<td>Blood is bright red and frothy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Needles and syringes are crucial supplies for injecting drugs. Needle tips and syringe barrels come in different sizes and brands.

A person's choice of needle is determined by:

- their injecting habits, skills and preferences
- their skin thickness and vein size
- the type of drug being used
- where the drugs are being injected:
  - veins (intravenous)
  - skin (skin popping)
  - muscles (muscle popping)

Some sites are safer than others. Using safer sites, like inside the elbow or lower arm, are less likely to cause injury. Injecting in the neck or groin areas are very risky sites.

When people cannot access new supplies, they are more likely to reuse or share needles and syringes. This increases the risk of transmitting blood borne viruses like HIV, hepatitis C and other infections.

A needle tip can become damaged after only one use. Barbed or bent needles can cause damage to skin and veins. This makes it easier for bacteria to enter the body leading to abscesses in the skin or spread throughout the body. A serious infection from bacteria is endocarditis which affects the heart valves.

- For every needle/syringe given out provide a sterile cooker, alcohol swab, filter, and water ampoule.
- Needles and syringes are single use and should never be shared.
- For every needle tip given out, also provide a new syringe barrel.
- Provide needles and syringes in blister packaging for both pre-packaged kits and as individual items. There should be no limit on the number of needles and syringes per person, per visit.
**KEY MESSAGES**

**WASH Hands**

Always wash hands before handling harm reduction supplies or drugs. If soap and water are not available, use BZK wipes or alcohol swabs. Use a new BZK wipe or alcohol swab to clean the drug preparation surface.

**DON’T SHARE**

Needles and syringes are for personal use and should not be shared. Sharing increases the risk of transmitting HIV, hepatitis B and C, and other infections.

**New EVERY TIME**

Use a new, sterile needle and syringe for every injection to reduce risk of infection and vein damage. Infection and vein damage can make it difficult to use some veins. This may lead people to inject into other riskier sites on the body.

**AVOID Reusing**

Never attempt to sharpen a used needle. It can become contaminated and create a burr on the needle. Using a damaged needle can cause injury to the veins. It can also weaken the needle and cause it to break off inside the vein.

**Thinnest needle = SMALLEST TRAUMA**

Higher gauge needles will lessen trauma to skin and veins. They may also clog more easily depending on the drug.

Thinner needles (e.g. 29G or 30G) are the safest choice for small, delicate veins like those in between fingers and toes.

**SPLITTING Drugs**

Always use a new, sterile detachable syringe when splitting drugs. It will reduce the risk of the solution being contaminated with blood from previously used needles and syringes.

**DISPOSAL**

Used needles and syringes should be disposed of safely. Please see pages 90-91 for information on safe disposal.

Try this line:

"If you’re injecting in your hands, try using thinner needles. Your veins will heal faster."
Needle Gauge

Refers to the diameter of the needle. The higher the gauge number (G), the thinner the needle. Standard insulin needles are 27G or 28G.

- Using needles with a smaller gauge (higher number) can result in:
  - less damage to the vein
  - less opportunity for infection
  - increased ability to hit smaller veins

- Intramuscular injections for steroids and other hormones require a large gauge needle (21G or 23G).

- People injecting methadone or certain drugs cut with a lot of impurities that may clog the syringe may also prefer needles with a larger gauge.

Needle Length

- Shorter needles (e.g. 5/16 inch or 8mm insulin needles) are commonly used for intravenous injections. A needle too short may miss the vein.

- Longer needles are commonly used for intramuscular injections. A needle too long may puncture through the vein or be difficult to position.

Needle Lumen

The needle lumen is the size of the hole in the middle of the needle.

Syringe Barrel Size

The syringe barrel size is the volume of liquid it can hold.

- Most insulin and tuberculin syringes are 1cc or ½ cc in size. 1cc = 1ml

- People injecting drugs requiring more water may prefer a larger barrel size.

- Methadone, steroid or hormone injectors may prefer 3cc syringes.

Brand

Each manufacturer makes needles and syringes with different designs. People may need to try different brands to find one they prefer.
**Fixed or Detachable Needles**

Syringe and needle sets come with a needle attached to the syringe, or with a detachable needle. Some individuals prefer syringes with a detachable needle. This way they can create their own set of needles and syringes depending on preferences. Using a larger syringe barrel with a smaller gauge needle is not uncommon. A sterile detachable syringe can be used for splitting drugs.

HIV and hepatitis C may live longer in syringes with detachable needles. It’s important to never reuse or share a detachable syringe.

**Dead Space**

Dead space is the space between the plunger and the needle that is filled with drug solution/blood after injection. Syringes made for detachable needles have a larger dead space that holds more blood. Sharing needles increases the risk of passing on blood borne viruses. Sharing detachable needles is an even greater risk.

**Low vs. High Dead Space Needles**

1. Syringe with fixed needle – low dead space
2. Syringe with detachable needle – low dead space
3. Modified syringe with detachable needle – reduced dead space
4. Syringe with detachable needle – high dead space
Cookers (also known as spoons) are metal containers where drugs are mixed and dissolved in water.

Drugs can come in a powder, pill or crystal (rock) form but need to become liquid for injecting. Always heat the solution to a boil to dissolve the drug and kill bacteria/mould/yeast and fungi. Heat the solution by holding a lighter or other heat source beneath the cooker. Let the drug solution cool before injecting.

**Cookers are the most commonly shared supply by people who inject drugs.**

People are more likely to share cookers or use household items when they cannot get sterile supplies. Items like kitchen spoons, bottle caps or the bottom of pop cans are not sterile. They increase the risk of contaminating the drug solution and/or the needle which can lead to infection. Sharing of cookers can involve the drug solution from one cooker being shared between several people or a used cooker being reused by another person. **Reusing or sharing a cooker puts people at risk of blood borne viruses including HIV and hepatitis C and B. Cookers should never be shared or reused.**

**A cooker for safer injection should:**
- Come in a sterile package
- Distribute heat evenly
- Have a heat resistant handle
- Have a flat bottom to avoid tipping
- Not contain harmful products or chemicals that could be released when heated

Cookers available through harm reduction programs may be slightly different in design and material. They are of the same high quality.

**Cookers are for single use.**

Cookers should be available in a variety of types. People choose cookers for the type of drug and personal preference. Access to sterile cookers reduces use of used or makeshift cookers.

For every needle/syringe given, provide one cooker + one filter + one water ampoule.

Provide cookers in both pre-packaged kits and as individual items. There should be no limit on the number of cookers per person, per visit.
KEY MESSAGES

**WASH** Hands
Always wash hands before handling harm reduction supplies or drugs. If soap and water are not available, use BZK wipes or alcohol swabs. Use a new BZK wipe or alcohol swab to clean the drug preparation surface.

**AVOID** Sharing
Cookers are for personal use and should not be shared. Sharing them can put people at risk of:
- blood borne viruses like HIV, hepatitis B and C
- bacterial and viral infection

**SINGLE** Use
A cooker loses its structural stability each time it is heated. For safety, use a new cooker every time.

**COOK** the Drugs
Always heat drug mixture until it bubbles to kill bacteria/mould/yeast and fungi.

Quickness to boil will depend on your heat source (lighter, torch lighter, candle).

**COOL** the Drugs
Never inject drugs when they are hot.

Cooling the drug solution after it has been heated will help prevent skin burns and damage to veins.

When injecting pills, heating will bring the wax coating to the surface. It can be removed before injecting.

**DISPOSAL**
Used cookers should be disposed of safely. Please see pages 90-91 for information on safe disposal.

Try this line:
“Oh, I see you are taking the Spoon cooker, have you tried the One-Use or Stericup cooker? They include a filter and post-injection dry swab.”
Filters

A sterile filter removes solid particles from the drug solution like undissolved fillers or wax.

The coating and filler in some pills may not dissolve in water and adding more vitamin C* will not help to break them down. Drawing up the drug solution through a sterile filter can remove solid particles including undissolved fillers or wax. Without a filter, these particles could enter the body or clog the needle. Sterile filters can reduce damage to the body from injecting drugs.

A filter should:
- Come in a sterile package
- Come out of the package ready to use without need for touching
- Be a dense pellet with sides having a membrane to ensure filter stability in liquid
- Retain the least amount of drug
- Retain the largest amount of impurities

Use only sterile filters from harm reduction programs. Household items like tampons, cigarette filters or Q-tips are not safe because the cotton is loose and long strands can be injected through the needle. Cigarette filters are dangerous because they have small particles of fiberglass that can be injected in the body.

Filters are single use and not to be shared.

Re-used or shared filters can be a source of bacterial and viral infections. They can retain blood particles that can transmit HIV, hepatitis B and C.

Provide one sterile filter pack for each needle/syringe given.

Provide filters in both pre-packaged kits and as individual items (packets). There should be no limit on the number of filter packets per person, per visit.

What is a Wash?

A wash is residue that may remain on a used cooker and/or filter from a previous injection. Sometimes the cooker and/or filter is saved to be re-used at a later time.

While this practice is common, it is dangerous because of the bacteria/mould/yeast and fungi that can grow on the filter and cooker after first use. Blood borne viruses such as HIV, hepatitis B and C can also be present in used filters and cookers. It is important to ALWAYS cook drugs to a boil every time to reduce some of these harms.

*Refer to vitamin C section
**KEY MESSAGES**

**WASH Hands**
Always wash hands before handling harm reduction supplies or drugs. If soap and water are not available, use BZK wipes or alcohol swabs. Use a new BZK wipe or alcohol swab to clean the drug preparation surface.

**Keep it CLEAN**
To decrease chance of contamination, drop the filter straight from the packet to the cooker without touching it.

**SINGLE USE**
Filters are one use and not to be shared. Cutting a filter or modifying it can introduce contamination. It can also cause the filter to come apart (loose fibres).

**COOK the Drugs**
Always heat drugs to a boil before injecting. Washes are not recommended, but they should always be heated to a boil as well.

**RISKS**
- Re-using or sharing a filter puts people at risk of blood borne viruses like HIV, hepatitis B and C.
- Bacteria/mould/yeast and fungi can live and grow on used filters.
- Re-used filters, or filters not designed for injection can cause 'cotton fever', an infection accompanied by fever, sweating, chills and other flu-like symptoms.

**DISPOSAL**
Used filters should be disposed of safely. Please see pages 90-91 for information on safe disposal.

Try this line:
"Hi! Can I tell you about filters - it's an important step."
Always wash hands and clean preparation area with soap and water, BZK wipe or alcohol swab.

Before opening the filter packet, pinch the filter with fingers so it does not fall out when opening the package.

Make sure the flat end of the filter is facing up. Avoid inserting the needle into the round side. It could cause the needle to bend.
**STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE**

4. Insert the needle into the flat end of the filter with the bevel of the needle facing down.

   Make sure the tip of the needle is in the centre of the filter and has not pierced all the way through. If the needle touches the cooker it can damage the tip.

5. Always dispose of filters and other used supplies safely.
STERILE WATER

To dissolve drugs in powder, pill or rock form you need water. Use ONLY sterile water to reduce the risk of infection. Using a newly opened ampoule (container) of sterile water is safest, and unused water should be thrown away. As soon as an ampoule of water is opened, bacteria can get in and start to grow.

Any source of water other than sterile water can contain bacteria. Distilled or spring water are not sterile and may contain more bacteria than tap water.

**Sharing or reusing water can put people at risk for bacterial and viral infections. Always open a new sterile water ampoule for every injection. Each water ampoule is one use.**

Provide single-use, 3ml sterile water ampoules with twist-off caps.

Inhalation or injection grade water can be injected. A 3ml ampoule of water fits in all cookers for a single injection.

**Provide one sterile water ampoule for every cooker and syringe given out.**

Provide sterile water both in pre-packaged kits and as individual items. There should be no limit on the number of water ampoules per person, per visit.
KEY MESSAGES

WASH Hands
Always wash hands before handling harm reduction supplies or drugs. If soap and water are not available, use BZK wipes or alcohol swabs. Use a new BZK wipe or alcohol swab to clean the drug prep surface.

AVOID Sharing Drug Solution
HIV and hepatitis C can be passed on when injection equipment is shared. Shared water can be a source for viral transmission.

NEW AMPOULE – Every Time
Use a new sterile water ampoule for every injection. Do not keep water for a second injection.

AVOID Contaminated Water
Bottled water, saliva, or puddles contain bacteria that can cause infection when injected.

DILUTE the Drugs
Using more water to dilute drugs is better for vein health. Reducing the concentration of the drug can reduce vein irritation.

COOK THE DRUGS – Every Time
Heat the drug solution until it bubbles and let it cool before injecting. Cooking drugs can kill bacteria/mould/yeast and fungi from the equipment and the drugs.

DAMAGED Water Ampoules
Never use sterile water ampoules that are leaking or punctured.

DON’T PUNCTURE the Ampoule
Avoid sticking a needle directly into the ampoule to draw up the water. This can contaminate the water and damage the needle.

DISPOSAL
Used water ampoules should be disposed of safely. Please see pages 90-91 for information on safe disposal.

Try this line:
“You know, the more water you add when mixing, the easier it will be on your veins.”
Alcohol swabs are needed to clean an injection site before injecting drugs. If the injection site is not cleaned properly, bacteria can enter the bloodstream and tissues. This can cause infections like abscesses, endocarditis and septicemia (blood poisoning by bacteria and other toxins).

Other uses for alcohol swabs include:
- Cleaning fingers when soap and water are not available
- Cleaning the drug preparation area
- Cleaning safer inhalation equipment

Alcohol swabs are individually wrapped in sterile, water-resistant packages with a 70% isopropyl alcohol content.

**Alcohol swabs are for personal use only and not to be shared.**

Provide alcohol swabs in both pre-packaged kits and as individual items. There should be no limit on the number of alcohol swabs per person, per visit.

**Symptoms of IPA poisoning include:**
- Dizziness
- Stomach pain
- Low body temperature
- Slow breathing
- Vomiting
- Throat pain or burning
- Low blood pressure
- Rapid heart rate
- Slurred speech
- Nausea
- Unresponsive reflexes
- Coma

**Alcohol swabs are for external use only**

Do not consume orally. Use of alcohol swabs for non-beverage alcohol can lead to Isopropyl alcohol (IPA) poisoning.
KEY MESSAGES

**WASH** Hands
Always wash hands before handling harm reduction supplies or drugs. If soap and water are not available, use BZK wipes or alcohol swabs. Use a new BZK wipe or alcohol swab to clean the drug prep surface.

**AVOID** Sharing
Alcohol swabs are single use. Used alcohol swabs may contain bacteria and viruses. Sharing them can lead to transmission of HIV, hepatitis B and C.

**ONE** Direction
Use the new swab once, swiping in one direction before injecting. Do not wipe back and forth as it can move bacteria to an already cleaned area.

**CLEAN** the Injection Site
– Every Time
Clean the injection site with a new swab every time. Incorrect use of alcohol swabs can contaminate the injection site.

**DO NOT** Ingest!
Do not ingest (eat or drink) alcohol swabs. It can lead to alcohol poisoning.

**Keep it CLEAN**
After cleaning the injection site, take care not to touch it. Bacteria could be reintroduced to the clean skin.

**Use Only BEFORE** Injection
Use an alcohol swab BEFORE injecting only, never after injecting.

**AFTER** Injecting
Use a dry swab AFTER injecting. Dry swabs are found in the One-Use and Stericup cooker packages. If a dry swab is not available, use a clean dry tissue or paper towel.

**DISPOSAL**
Used alcohol swabs should be disposed of safely. Please see pages 90-91 for information on safe disposal.

Try this line:
“Hey, do you have enough alcohol swabs? You can also use the swabs to clean your drug prep area. Cleaning it will decrease chance of infection.”
Using a tourniquet or ‘tie’ helps to make veins easier to find. It restricts blood flow in veins by causing them to swell or bulge out. People new to injecting often can find veins without using a tourniquet.

When a tourniquet is not available people use what they can find, such as belts, bandanas, condoms, wires, ropes or shoelaces. These items are not elastic enough for quick and easy release and can lead to trauma of skin and veins.

The safest tourniquets are smooth, easy to remove, thin, flexible, non-latex with a non-porous surface. Some veins move when the needle is inserted into the skin (rolling veins). To prevent this, a tourniquet is used to hold the vein in place.

The smallest amount of blood can remain on a tourniquet. Sharing them can put others at risk of hepatitis C and HIV transmission.

**Tourniquets are for personal use only and not to be shared.**

Provide tourniquets in both pre-packaged kits and as individual items. There should be no limit on the number of tourniquets per person, per visit.
KEY MESSAGES

**WASH** Hands

Always wash hands before handling harm reduction supplies or drugs. If soap and water are not available, use BZK wipes or alcohol swabs. Use a new BZK wipe or alcohol swab to clean the drug prep surface.

**AVOID** Sharing

Tourniquets are for personal use and should not be shared. Sharing them could lead to:
- Bacterial and viral infection
- Tissue or vein damage
- Blood circulation problems

Find a **VEIN**

Here are some tips to help make veins easier to find when not using a tourniquet:
- Gently massage or slap the vein
- Put a hot washcloth over the vein
- Let arm or leg hang down
- Clench and re-clench the fist
- Windmill (swing arm in a circle)
- Vigorous exercise

**Proper USE**

Using a tourniquet correctly can:
- Make veins easier to find
- Prevent long-term vein damage
- Make sure there are less missed injections
- Keep the vein in place by preventing it from moving (rolling vein)

**Know the RISKS**

Don’t leave the tourniquet on while you inject or after injection. Leaving it on can stop blood circulation, cause a limb to turn blue, lose sensation, and even lead to gangrene.

If not removed before injecting, pressure is needed to get the solution to the vein. This can lead to drug leaking into tissue or vein rupture. The injection site will bleed more easily because of pressure in the vein.

A common reason for a missed hit (injection) is not releasing the tourniquet before injecting.

**DISPOSAL**

Used tourniquets should be disposed of safely. Please see pages 90-91 for information on safe disposal.

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Try this line:

“If you have trouble finding a vein, try using a tourniquet. It can help the vein pop out.”
**TOURNIQUETS**

1. Lay the tourniquet flat over your bicep (on the area above the elbow).

2. Take the farthest piece and pull it up under your arm. Put this piece between your teeth and pull the tourniquet. Do not tighten too much. You should feel the pulse beating in your arm.

3. Hold the loose end between your thumb and pointer finger. Wrap this piece around the stretched one.
STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

4. Take the loose end and slip it under the tourniquet.

5. Once it is tied, release the end of the tourniquet that you hold in your mouth.

6. Once the needle is in the vein but before injecting, loosen the tourniquet. To remove it, pull the shorter end for a quick release.
Vitamin C is needed to make certain drugs into a solution for injection. These drugs (crack and brown/black tar heroin) come in a solid form (rock or powder). The best acidifier to use for these drugs is pharmacy-grade vitamin C. Small sachets of vitamin C are available through harm reduction programs.

Vitamin C can be harmful if misused, like using too much or when not needed. Using more vitamin C won’t break down filler or coating of pills. But it will increase the risks of injecting a very acidic solution.

When people do not have access to vitamin C from harm reduction programs, they will use household products like lemon juice or vinegar. These products are not sterile, safe or recommended. They are stronger than vitamin C and can:

- Cause pain at the injection site
- Cause vein damage and irritation
- Lead to serious infections

Lemon juice may contain bacteria and fungus. When injected it can cause:

- Veins to collapse
- Abscesses (painful pus that has built up in the body tissue)
- Cellulitis (bacterial infection in the deep layers of skin and layers of fat and tissue beneath)
- Heart infection (endocarditis)
- Eye infection causing blindness

Pharmaceutical grade vitamin C available through harm reduction programs is safest for preparing drugs for injection. It comes in 100mg sachets that are air tight and water resistant. 100mg is more than any single injection requires.

Small single-use sachets of vitamin C can reduce:

- The risks of sharing ascorbic acid
- The risks from using household acids

Provide vitamin C in both pre-packaged kits and as individual items. There should be no limit on the number of ascorbic acid sachets per person, per visit.
KEY MESSAGES

WASH Hands
Always wash hands before handling harm reduction supplies or drugs. If soap and water are not available, use BZK wipes or alcohol swabs. Use a new BZK wipe or alcohol swab to clean the drug prep surface.

EXPIRY DATE
Always check the vitamin C expiry date on the box before distributing the small sachets.

SAY NO to Lemon Juice or Vinegar
Using lemon juice, vinegar or other acids can cause health risks and lead to bacterial or fungal infections.

Start Very SMALL
Start by adding the smallest amount (a pinch). If more is needed to dissolve the drug it can be added (no more than a quarter of the package). This is better than starting with too much and ending up with a very acidic drug solution.

Remember: if the drug has dissolved but still has solid bits, it is likely filler that shouldn’t be injected.

Know the RIGHT AMOUNT
Use the smallest amount of vitamin C to dissolve the drug and avoid damage to veins.

Once a package has been opened, the content is no longer sterile.

Can You DRINK IT?
Vitamin C from harm reduction programs is intended for dissolving drugs for injection, not drinking. If too much vitamin C is ingested, the excess will be peed out of the body. Too much at one time (more than 1g or 1,000mg = 10 sachets) can cause stomach upset.

AVOID Sharing
HIV and hepatitis C can be passed on by sharing used injection related equipment. Vitamin C can be a source of viral transmission if a number of people use the same sachet to prepare injections.

DISPOSAL
Used vitamin C sachets should be disposed of safely. Please see pages 90-91 for information on safe disposal.

Is vitamin C needed?

- ✔ Crack Cocaine
- ✔ Black/Brown Tar Heroin
- ✗ Cocaine Powder
- ✗ Crystal Meth
- ✗ Fentanyl
- ✗ Heroin
- ✗ Prescription Pills

Try this line:
“You’d like some Vit C to dissolve crack? Just make sure you don’t use too much Vit C, it can hurt your veins.”
BZK wipes are antiseptic towelettes for cleaning hands when soap and water are not available. They can be an important harm reduction tool for lowering infection rates among people who use drugs by reducing the spread of bacteria and fungi.

BZK wipes can assist with wound care and general hygiene. It is best to have discussions with your organization to determine the messages to provide with this product as there could be medical directives to follow.

Use BZK wipes to clean hands before handling harm reduction equipment. Dirt on the hands carry germs and debris that can transfer to surfaces and objects. Contaminated equipment can allow bacteria to enter the bloodstream. This can result in infections like endocarditis and blood disorders.

Hand sanitizer is not effective if hands have dirt on them. The sanitizer just moves the debris around the hands. In the instance of very dirty hands, handwashing with soap and water or BZK Wipes first is important. Hand sanitizer can then be used afterward.

BZK wipes can be beneficial for individuals who do not have access to soap and water.

Benzalkonium Chloride antiseptic (BZK) wipes are individually wrapped in water-resistant packages for single use.

Ensure people understand that BZK wipes are not a replacement for alcohol swabs.

Washing hands with soap and water is always best.

Provide BZK wipes as individual items until there is a clear understanding of the specific need for this product and to avoid confusion with alcohol swabs.
**KEY MESSAGES**

**WASH** Hands

Always wash hands before handling harm reduction supplies or drugs. If soap and water are not available, use BZK wipes or alcohol swabs. Use a new BZK wipe or alcohol swab to clean the drug prep surface.

**AVOID** Sharing

BZK wipes are single use and not to be shared or re-used. Sharing them can lead to bacterial infections and transmission of HIV, hepatitis B, and C.

**EXTERNAL** Use Only

BZK wipes are for external use only. If inhaled or ingested, they can cause:

- Stomach distress
- Respiratory tract irritation
- Nausea
- Vomiting

**DON’T** Confuse

BZK Wipes do not replace alcohol swabs. Alcohol swabs remain the most effective product for cleaning an injection site before injecting. Use a dry swab after injecting.

**BE CAREFUL**

Do not use BZK Wipes if there is skin irritation including:

- Redness
- Drying
- Edema (swelling)
- Cracking

**DISPOSAL**

Used BZK wipes should be disposed of safely. Please see pages 90-91 for information on safe disposal.

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**USE**

**BZK Wipe**

- Clean hands
- Clean prep surface
- Clean a wound

**Alcohol Swab**

- Clean fingers
- Clean prep surface
- Clean injection site

**Dry Swab**

Use after injecting to absorb blood (found in cooker packages)

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Try this line:

“Washing your hands with soap and water is not always possible. BZK wipes are an excellent option if you can’t use soap and water.”
Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic (artificial) opioid. It is a downer that slows breathing and heart rate. It is used medically to treat people with severe pain especially after surgery. It is also used as an anaesthetic for surgery.

Fentanyl sold on the streets is often mixed with other drugs. This could be from cross contamination or on purpose. Fentanyl is up to 100 times more potent than morphine. Even small doses can result in overdose and cause breathing to stop.

Fentanyl comes in these forms:

- Pill
- Coloured powder
- Chalky rock that could be a variety of colours
- Transdermal patch

These methods of preparation involve using safer practices. Not all steps can be followed all the time by everyone. It is important to stay as close to safer practices as possible to reduce the risk of health complications.

A Method for Preparing **Fentanyl Powder/Pills** for Injection

1. Put the finely crushed fentanyl powder in a new sterile cooker.
2. Add sterile water from a new ampoule.
3. Heat the solution to a boil, the drug will be fully dissolved.
4. Let the solution cool before injecting.
5. Place a new sterile filter into the cooker.
6. Insert the needle in the flat end of the filter and slowly draw the drug into the syringe. The bevel of the needle should be facing down in the filter.
7. When injecting, the bevel should be facing up and toward the heart.
REFERENCE GUIDE

KEY MESSAGES

START LOW, GO SLOW
Using slowly gives the body time to adjust. It can help prevent taking too much at one time. Fentanyl is extremely strong.

Fentanyl Acts FAST
The initial intense high is often followed by a more clear feeling. It does not mean fentanyl has left the body. Take care because dosing again right away could lead to overdose.

Recognize the SIGNS OF OVERDOSE
Opioids taken in large enough doses can depress breathing and lead to death. It's important to know how to recognize the signs of overdose.

Carry NALOXONE
Encourage everyone to carry a naloxone kit. It is used to reverse opioid overdose only. It has no effect on overdoses caused by other drugs.

AVOID Using Alone
Remind people to avoid using alone and always have naloxone on hand. If possible try to have a plan where a friend could check in on them.

Be AWARE
Overdose from fentanyl is possible from street or pharmaceutical grades. Fentanyl can be added to other opioid and non-opioid drugs to increase the potency. It is odourless, colourless, and tasteless. It’s impossible to tell by the look or smell if fentanyl is in any other street drug.

Accidental opioid overdoses can happen when people use a drug they don't know had fentanyl added to it. Dealers may or may not know their drug product contains fentanyl.
Preparing Cocaine & Crack Cocaine

For Injection

**Powdered Cocaine** dissolves easily in water. Always heat the solution to a boil to reduce bacteria/viruses/mould/yeast and fungi.

**Crack Cocaine** does not dissolve well in water. Adding a small amount of vitamin C (ascorbic acid) changes the base in crack to a water soluble cocaine salt. Once fully dissolved, it can be injected. Always use pharmacy grade vitamin C from your harm reduction program. Using household items like lemon juice or vinegar can cause vein damage, infection and other health issues.

People who inject cocaine or crack cocaine tend to use more frequently.

### A Method of Preparing Cocaine for Injection

1. Put the finely crushed powder in a new sterile cooker (the finer the powder, the easier it will dissolve).
2. Add sterile water from an unopened ampoule.
3. Heat the solution until it bubbles.
4. Let it cool before injecting.
5. Insert a new sterile filter directly from the package.
6. Insert the needle tip with bevel facing down gently into the flat end of the filter.
7. Draw up the solution slowly into the syringe.

### A Method of Preparing Crack Cocaine for Injection

1. Break rocks into smaller pieces before putting in a new sterile cooker. A pill crusher or two sterile cookers can be used to crush crack cocaine.
2. Add sterile water from an unopened ampoule.
3. Dissolve crack by adding a very small amount of vitamin C to the drug solution.
4. Mix the solution using the plunger of a sterile syringe.
5. Heat the drug solution until it bubbles.
6. Let it cool before injecting.
7. Insert a new sterile filter directly from the package.
8. Insert the needle tip with bevel facing down gently into the flat end of the filter.
9. Draw up the solution slowly into the syringe.

These methods of preparation involve using safer practices. Not all steps can be followed all the time by everyone. It is important to stay as close to safer practices as possible to reduce the risk of health complications.
KEY MESSAGES

Individuals who inject cocaine and crack cocaine will inject more often. It’s important they have access to appropriate amounts of sterile supplies to meet this need. Encourage planning ahead. Re-using supplies is never recommended.

**RISKS** from injecting cocaine and crack include:

- Skin damage
- Vein damage

**ALWAYS Flag**

Cocaine narrows blood vessels and numbs the veins. Always flag (draw blood into the syringe) to make sure the needle is in the vein before injecting.

**Have Ample Supplies**

Plan ahead to make sure appropriate amounts of sterile supplies are on hand.

**SPEEDBALLING**

Be very careful if ‘speedballing’ (injecting cocaine + heroin OR crack + heroin). It increases risk of vein damage and infection of blood borne viruses like HIV and hepatitis C. Speedballing has a higher risk of overdose than injecting crystal meth or heroin alone. It increases risk of death from stroke, heart attack, or respiratory failure.

**Give Time to HEAL**

Encourage people to sometimes take a break from injecting. It will give their veins time to heal. If that is not possible, encourage that they alternate injection sites.

**AVOID Skin Popping**

Skin popping (injecting under the skin) should be avoided. Cocaine cannot absorb easily into tissue. This can lead to constricted blood flow and tissue damage.

**Could Contain FENTANYL**

Drugs in the fentanyl family are sometimes found in cocaine and crack cocaine. Dozing or feeling sleepy right after injecting could mean the cocaine/crack cocaine had fentanyl or other opioids in it. There is no way to tell by colour, taste or smell if fentanyl is in cocaine or crack cocaine.

**Carry NALOXONE**

Encourage everyone to carry a naloxone kit. It is used to reverse opioid overdose only. It has no effect on overdoses caused by other drugs.

**AVOID Using Alone**

Remind people to avoid using alone and always have naloxone on hand. If possible, suggest they have a plan for a friend to check in on them.

**HARMS of Injecting Cocaine & Crack Cocaine**

- These drugs break down quickly in the body (short half-life). This results in a high that is short leading people to inject more often.
- Cocaine can cause temporary loss of pain sensation in the body. Often people do not feel skin, tissue or vein damage caused by poking or moving the needle around.
- Cocaine can narrow the blood vessels. Blood flow is decreased and it takes longer for injection sites or wounds to heal.
PREPARING CRYSTAL METH FOR INJECTION

Crystal methamphetamine (crystal meth) can come in clear crystal chunks or shiny blue-white rocks. Also called ‘ice’, ‘glass’ or ‘ish’. It can be swallowed, snorted, injected or smoked.

Injecting crystal meth causes immediate and intense effects. The comedown and craving for more is also intense. This can also be the riskiest method of using crystal meth.

Crystal meth will dissolve with water. Always heat drugs to a boil to reduce bacteria and viruses. Allow to cool before injecting.

A Method of Preparing CRYSTAL METH for Injection

1. Crush rocks into a fine powder. The finer the powder is, the easier it will dissolve. A pill crusher or two sterile cookers can be used to crush crystal meth.
2. Place crushed powder in a new sterile cooker.
3. Add sterile water from an unopened ampoule.
4. Stir using the plunger end of a new sterile syringe.
5. Heat the solution until it bubbles.
6. Let it cool before injecting to reduce skin burns and damage to veins.
7. Place a new sterile filter directly from the package into the cooker.
8. Place the needle into the flat end of the filter. The bevel of the needle should be facing down.
9. Draw up the solution slowly into the syringe.
10. Tap to remove air bubbles.

This method of preparation involves using safer practices. Not all steps can be followed all the time by everyone. It is important to stay as close to safer practices as possible to reduce the risk of health complications.
**KEY MESSAGES**

**Minimizing RISKS**
Different consumption methods present different health risks.

**Health COMPLICATIONS**
Injecting crystal meth can lead to health complications such as abscesses, bruises, collapsed veins and infections.

**SKIN POPPING**
Crystal meth is released slower when injected under the skin (skin popping) or muscles (muscle popping). It causes a slower onset of effects and less intense high. Both skin or muscle popping of crystal meth can be painful and lead to abscesses.

**SAFER Sex**
Crystal meth is sometimes used to enhance sexual activity. People might engage in riskier sex than they would normally have: rougher, aggressive sex without a condom. This increases risk of transmitting HIV, hepatitis B and C, and sexually transmitted diseases. Offering safer crystal meth supplies offers the chance to also provide sex education.

**SPEEDBALLING**
Speedballing has a higher risk of overdose than injecting crystal meth or heroin alone. The effects from meth are longer than heroin. A person’s heart rate may rapidly change pace from very slow to very quick. The quick change in heart rate and respiration can cause irregular heartbeat, heart failure or stroke.

**Long Term EFFECTS**
Extended use of crystal meth can cause impotence. This may lead some people to combine the drug with erectile dysfunction medication (like Viagra®). This combination of drugs puts strain on the heart. If poppers (amyl-nitrate) are added to this combination, it can cause heart failure.

**PROTECT Your Veins**
Injecting crystal meth can scar veins or cause them to collapse. It can also cause them to narrow or shrink making it hard to find a healthy vein.

**DO A TEST Shot**
Take a test shot before injecting the whole dose. Crystal meth is often cut with other chemicals and the quality and strength/potency can vary.

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**Be careful if mixing crystal meth with other drugs:**

1. Mixing different drugs can increase risk of overdose.

2. If trying crystal meth for the first time, it’s best to take it on its own. Combining it with other drugs or alcohol can increase health risks.
   - Combining with other stimulant drugs increases the risk of heart problems, overheating, and can induce psychosis.
   - Combining with depressants (opioids, benzodiazepines, alcohol) increases the risk of heart attack, coma and respiratory failure.
Injecting prescription opioids is never safe, but using safer practices can reduce harms. This method of preparation uses safer practices. Staying as close to safer practices as possible will reduce the risk of health complications.

One Way of Preparing **Prescription Opioids** for Injection

1. Crush pills to a fine powder so they will dissolve easier. If using capsules, open the capsule and empty the powder or beads. Crush the powder or beads to a fine powder.

2. Put the finely crushed powder into a new, sterile cooker.

3. Add sterile water from a new unopened ampoule. Pills often need more water to dissolve properly compared to other drugs.

4. Heat the solution until it bubbles.

5. Let the drug solution cool before injecting.

6. Some fillers in pills will solidify in the cooker when the solution cools down. They can be removed from the cooker before injecting using sterile tweezers.

7. Cooling the solution reduces risk of skin burns and vein damage.

8. Place a new sterile filter into the cooker.

9. Insert the needle in the flat end of the filter. The bevel of the needle should be facing down.

10. Slowly draw the solution up into the syringe.

This method of preparation involves using safer practices. Not all steps can be followed all the time by everyone. It is important to stay as close to safer practices as possible to reduce the risk of health complications.
**KEY MESSAGES**

**REMOVE Coating**
Any coating on the outside of the pill needs to be removed before injecting.

**CONTROL Bacteria**
Pills should never be put in the mouth to remove any coating. Bacteria in saliva (spit) will be passed to the pill and added to the drug solution.

**CRUSHING Pills**
Crushing pills to a fine powder and using plenty of sterile water can help them dissolve better.

**COOK the Drugs**
It’s important to cook drugs every time. Heating drugs to a boil will:
- Reduce bacteria/mould/yeast and fungi that may be on the drug or supplies
- Help separate fillers or binders from the drug

**AVOID Reusing**
Drug residue can remain on the cooker and filter after preparing the injection. Some people will add water to the used cooker or filter again (called a ‘wash’) to make an additional injection. It is recommended to never reuse or share used supplies. Always cook drugs every time, including washes to reduce infection and blood borne viruses.

**Could Contain FENTANYL**
Fentanyl can come in many forms. Sometimes opioids sold on the street can contain fentanyl.

**Carry NALOXONE**
Encourage everyone to carry a naloxone kit. It is used to reverse opioid overdose only. It has no effect on overdoses caused by other drugs.

**AVOID Using Alone**
Remind people to avoid using alone and always have naloxone on hand. If possible, suggest they have a plan for a friend to check in on them.
INJECTING PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS

KNOW THE HARMs - REDUCE THE RISKs

There are many reasons why injecting prescription pills leads to greater harms.

PILLS CONTAIN MORE THAN JUST THE DRUG

Prescription opioids are not intended for injection. They contain a variety of substances including:

- Starch
- Gelatine
- Wax
- Cellulose
- Other binders (to help keep the substances in the pill together)
- Abuse deterrents (substances that are meant to prevent drug misuse)

These substances can end up in the bloodstream when injected. They can cause significant health complications such as:

- Disruption of red blood cells which carry oxygen to the body
- Thrombosis (blood clotting)
- Remaining in blood circulation as floating blood clots
- Granulomas (nodes of hard tissue created by the body’s response to a foreign object)
- Staying as a gelatine or crystal-like form in the veins
- Particles of injected pills and clumps of bacteria can block blood vessels. This blockage can cause an embolism.
PILLS CONTAIN FILLERS

Preparing prescription pills for injection is not a quick process. The many stages of preparation make it easy to introduce bacteria. Bacteria can cause serious health problems such as:

- Abscesses
- General infection (sepsis) carried throughout the body
- Slowed wound healing
- Bacterial endocarditis (bacterial infection of a heart valve)

INJECTING PILLS INCREASES RISKS

Injecting pills puts people at higher risk of getting hepatitis C.

Larger syringe barrels (e.g. 3ml or 5ml) generally come with detached needles. These syringes have more dead space. Dead space is the area beyond the plunger that is filled with blood after injecting. More blood in the dead space is known to increase risk of transmitting hepatitis C.
White heroin is water-soluble and dissolves easily when heated. Brown and black tar heroin are not water-soluble and need heat and an acidifier like vitamin C to dissolve properly.

**Preparing heroin for injection will depend on the type of heroin used.**

**For white heroin a safer injection practice would be:**

1. Put the finely crushed heroin powder in a new sterile single use cooker.
2. Add sterile water from a new ampoule.
3. Heat the solution until it bubbles. The drug will be fully dissolved.
4. Let the solution cool before injecting.
5. Place a new sterile filter into the cooker.
6. Insert the needle in the flat end of the filter and slowly draw the drug into the syringe. The bevel of the needle should be facing down in the filter.
7. When injecting, the bevel should be facing up and towards the heart.

**For brown or black tar heroin include the following step (before step 3):**

- Add the smallest amount of vitamin C to the drug and water solution before heating.

This method of preparation involves using safer practices. Not all steps can be followed all the time by everyone. It is important to stay as close to safer practices as possible to reduce the risk of health complications.
"START LOW, GO SLOW"

A person can lose their tolerance to heroin after just a couple days of not using it.

OVERDOSE Risk

Many things can increase the chance of overdose for both people with low tolerance and experienced drug users.

Risk of overdose increases when:

- Doing too much drug at one time
- Doing too much drug over a short period of time
- Mixing more than one drug at a time

Buyer BEWARE

Harmful substances are often ‘cut’ into the drug. Cutting drugs means substances are added to the drug as filler. Filler helps a drug dealer stretch sales.

Just a few examples of filler could be:

- Caffeine
- Fentanyl
- Starch
- Aspirin
- Sucrose (sugar)
- Talcum powder
- Baking powder
- Laundry detergent

Recognize Signs of OVERDOSE

In large doses, heroin can make breathing extremely difficult or even stop. Know how to recognize signs of overdose and give naloxone.

Carry NALOXONE

Encourage everyone to carry a naloxone kit. It is used to reverse opioid overdose only. It has no effect on overdoses caused by other drugs.

AVOID Using Alone

Remind people to avoid using alone and always have naloxone on hand. If possible, suggest they have a plan for a friend to check in on them.