

## HIV/AIDS - Substance Abuse



### Injection Drug Use

Sharing needles and other equipment for drug injection is a well-known way to transmit HIV. People who have sex with an injection drug user are also at risk for infection through the sexual transmission of HIV.

### Why does injecting drugs put you at risk for HIV?

Sharing drug equipment (or "works") is a major risk factor for spreading HIV. Infected blood



can be introduced into drug solutions by:

- Using blood-contaminated syringes to prepare drugs
- Reusing bottle caps, spoons, or other containers ("spoons" and "cookers") used to dissolve drugs in water and to heat drug solutions
- Reusing small pieces of cotton or cigarette filters ("cottons") used to filter out particles that could block the needle
- Reusing water used to dissolve drugs or clean syringes



### How can injection drug users reduce their risk for HIV infection?

The best way to reduce your risk of HIV is to stop injecting drugs—but here are some other things that will reduce your risk of getting HIV or transmitting it to others:

- Never reuse or "share" syringes, water, or drug preparation equipment.



- Only use syringes obtained from a reliable source - pharmacies or needle-exchange programs.

- Use a new,

sterile syringe each time.

- If possible, use sterile water to prepare drugs—otherwise, use clean water from a reliable source (such as fresh tap water).
- Use a new or disinfected container ("cooker") and a new filter ("cotton") each time you prepare drugs.
- Clean the injection site with a new alcohol swab before you inject.
- Safely dispose of syringes after one use.



### Other Drug-Related Risks for HIV

*Methamphetamine* ("meth") is a highly addictive stimulant drug that can increase sexual arousal while reducing inhibitions. It can also be injected.



These factors put meth users at an increased HIV risk both through sexual transmission and injection drug use.

There is a particularly strong link between meth use and HIV transmission for men who have sex with men (MSM). They may:

- Use condoms less often
- Have more sex partners
- Engage in unprotected anal sex
- Inject meth instead of smoking or snorting it



### Alcohol and Other Drugs



The risk for HIV associated with substance abuse involves more than simply the sharing of drug injecting equipment. Use of drugs and alcohol can interfere with judgment about sexual and other behavior.

Be sure to get answers to any questions you have about HIV/AIDS. Your public health department and health care provider can help.



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