

Lowering the HIV risk of injected drugs - Substance Abuse, part 4

If you are injecting drugs, there are some things you can do to lower your risk for getting HIV.



Use only new, sterile needles and drug preparation equipment, or "works" each time you inject. You can get new needles and works at needle exchange programs. Some pharmacies may sell needles without a prescription. Talk to your healthcare provider if you can't find sterile needles.

If you really can't find new needles, then clean used needles with bleach. This may lower the chance of HIV but there is still some risk. Use sterile water to prepare drugs, such as water that has been boiled for 5 minutes. Or use clean water from a reliable source such as fresh tap water.

Clean your skin with a new alcohol swab before you inject.



Never share needles or "works!" Be careful not to get someone else's blood on your hands or your needle or works.

Throw away needles and syringes after one use. It is not safe to put them in the regular trash. You can use an old milk jug to collect used needles and syringes, and then seal the container before throwing it out. Check with your local health department about the correct way to throw the container away so that it does not put others at risk.

Get tested for HIV at least once a year.

Ask your healthcare provider about taking daily medicine to prevent HIV, called pre-exposure prophylaxis or PrEP.

Don't have sex if you're high. If you do have sex, use a condom the correct way every time.

The best way to reduce your risk of HIV is to stop using drugs. Talk with a health care provider about substance abuse treatment. Be sure to get answers to any questions you have about HIV/AIDS. Your public health department, health care provider, and public library can help.



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