

Injecting Drugs Safely

Addiction is a true medical disease. Our doctors and healthcare team care about you and want to be sure we protect your health. Heroin and IV drugs are addictive, hard to quit, and dangerous. IV drug use has high rates of overdose, skin and blood infections, hepatitis C, and HIV. We encourage you to seek help for your addiction to heroin or other IV drugs as soon as possible but we understand that entering into recovery and getting help can be a difficult process. We care about you and want you to be healthier and safer. We also understand that you may continue to use IV drugs. If you do decide to continue IV drug use, we want to be sure that you are being as safe as possible – so you don’t suffer an infection, overdose, or other complication.

How To Inject Safely	
How to avoid an overdose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never use alone. Injecting with another person can help prevent an accidental overdose. <i>Colorado’s Good Samaritan Law</i> protects people who call 911 to report an overdose, and stay with the person until help arrives. • Always carry naloxone. Naloxone can reverse the effects of a heroin overdose and saves lives. It is available at most syringe access programs and Colorado pharmacies. Medicaid and other insurances will pay for it. • Try tester shots. When trying a new product or after not using for a period of time, patients should use a small test dose (i.e. tester shot) to see how potent it is. Heroin purity in Denver is between 2-37% and you never know what’s in the product you bought. • Do not mix drugs. Mixing heroin or opioids, especially with benzodiazepines (e.g. Xanax, Valium or Ativan), alcohol, or barbiturates greatly increases your risk of overdose! If you do mix, decrease the amount of each drug you are using.
How to avoid hepatitis and HIV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to avoid sharing equipment. Even though HIV can survive only minutes outside the body, it can live for days to weeks inside needles. The risk of transmission is highest when drug paraphernalia is shared between different people in a short period of time. Hepatitis B and C are strong and hardy viruses and can survive between 1 and 3 weeks outside of the body. Hepatitis can be spread in every piece of injection equipment including needles, syringes, cookers, injection water (lives in injection water for 62 days), and cottons. TRY NOT TO SHARE ANYTHING OR BORROW ANY INJECTION ITEMS!
How to avoid other infections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice good hygiene. Always wash your hands and clean the injection site. Use an alcohol pad to clean the skin right before you inject. You can buy 100 alcohol pads for under \$2 at most pharmacies, and syringe access programs have them for free. • Use sterile water to prepare the product. Many infections come from unsafe water

	<p>supplies. Try not to use river water, toilet water, or saliva to dissolve product into an injectable form. Bottled water is much safer than tap water but is NOT sterile! The safest water comes from single-use containers of sterile water. You can get these at most syringe access programs or needle exchanges. If these aren't available, water should be sterilized by boiling it for 10 minutes then letting it cool down! Never lick a needle before putting it into your skin!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use sterile equipment. Try not to reuse equipment on yourself because it often contains bacteria. If you must reuse equipment, please clean it by: soaking it in bleach for two minutes & then rinsing it with clean, cold water. Do that multiple times.
<p>How to protect your veins</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the smallest needle possible. Do not use the same injection site – try to rotate between different sites. Do not inject in the neck, groin, or foot veins as these areas have a higher risk of infection. You should also not inject in the wrist as there are arteries and nerves that can be accidentally hit. Staying well hydrated by drinking plenty of water can make it easier to find veins. Never use lime juice or lemon juice if you need to dissolve a product. These can cause infections and are very damaging to veins. Use citric acid solution if your product is very hard to dissolve.
<p>Syringe exchange programs</p>	<p>Boulder:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Boulder County Public Health, 3482 Broadway, 303-413-7500 2. Boulder County AIDS Project (BCAP), 2118 14th Street, 303-444-6121 3. Addiction Recovery Center, 3180 Airport Road, 303-441-1281 <p>Longmont:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Boulder County Public Health, 529 Coffman, Suite 200, 303-678-6166

For more information about recovery options, we would encourage you to call this helpline for more information and treatment opportunities near you. They provide a confidential, free, 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year, information service, in English and Spanish for individuals and family members facing substance use disorders.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline

1-800-662-HELP (4357)