

Running warm water over the injection site will help raise a vein. So will opening and closing your hand in a pumping action.

Try not to touch anything that hasn't been cleaned until you have finished injecting.

Put the needle into your arm at a 45-degree angle, with the hole facing up. Blood will sometimes appear in the barrel when the needle is inserted in the vein.

Pull back (jack back) the plunger and blood should appear. If there is still no visible blood in the fit, remove the needle and tourniquet from your arm, apply pressure (using a cotton ball, tissue or toilet paper) to stop any bleeding, take a deep breath and start again.



When you are sure the needle is in the vein, loosen the tourniquet and slowly depress the plunger. If you feel any resistance or pain, you may have missed the vein and will need to start again.

Remove needle, keep your arm straight, and apply pressure to the injection site for a couple of minutes (using a cotton ball, tissue or toilet paper). Don't use a swab to stop the bleeding: it may in fact stop the blood clotting.



4) Cleaning Up



Even if you are disposing of your fit, rinse it with clean cold tap water, straight after your hit. This will remove most of the blood and prevent it from blocking and help reduce the likelihood of dirty hits if you have to use the fit again.



Dispose of the rinsing water immediately, so no-one else can use it and contaminate their equipment with your blood.

Recap you own fit and dispose of it in a disposal container or a puncture-proof, child-proof container and return to your NSP. Don't recap other people's fits.



Wipe down the area where you have mixed up with soapy (detergent) water. Where there is a possibility of skin contact, the area should be then wiped with household bleach.

Don't re-use swabs, filters, or open water ampoules: they can become contaminated once opened.



When you have cleaned up, wash your hands and arms with warm soapy water. If this is impossible, use single wipes with new swabs instead.

Store all your equipment in a clean, safe place.

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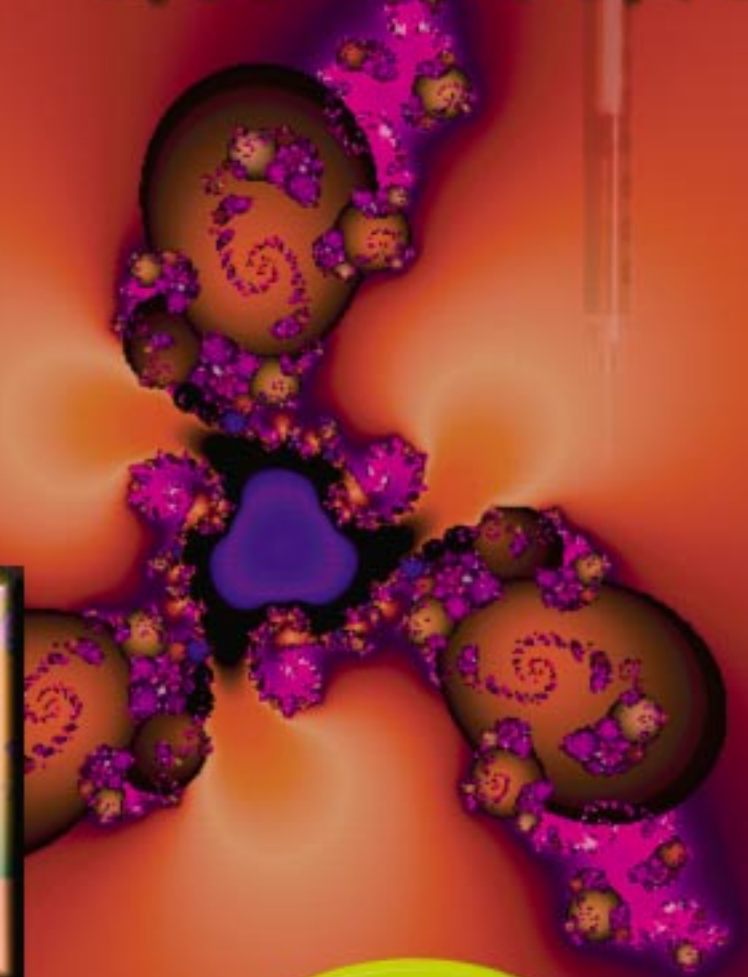
For more information see:
AIVL Cleaning Fits Guide and Handy Hints.

The information provided in this publication is based on the best evidence available to date June 2000.

These guidelines have been developed by the AIVL
National Hepatitis C Education and Prevention Program.



SAFER INJECTING



AUSTRALIAN INTRAVENOUS LEAGUE

The best way to avoid contracting hepatitis C and other blood-borne viruses such as HIV and hepatitis B is not to inject.

Why should you use safer injecting practices for every hit?

Safer injecting practices can prevent the transmission of hepatitis C and other blood-borne viruses such as HIV and hepatitis B. It can also help prevent dirty hits, bruising, blood poisoning and abscesses.

If you are hepatitis C positive it is still important to protect yourself as you can be reinfected with a different or the same strain of hepatitis C or with hepatitis B and HIV.

If you can't get new equipment you could try using your drugs another way such as snorting, swallowing, smoking or stuffing (up ya bum).

Being aware of blood!

Blood-borne viruses such as hepatitis C can live outside the body for days (even weeks). Even microscopic amounts (too small to see) of blood can transmit hepatitis C and blood can be transferred from one person to the next while injecting.

So being aware of blood means being alert to what is happening throughout the injecting process so you won't accidentally expose yourself to any viruses. If you think blood, yours or someone else's, has contaminated any surface or equipment you should replace any sterile equipment, re-clean any other things that may have been contaminated, and re-wash your hands before proceeding.

Safer Injecting Procedures

When injecting it is important to do so safely and carefully. The best way to play it safe is to always inject with a new fit, new sterile water, new swabs (at least one to swab your spoon and one to swab your injecting site), a clean tourniquet, a clean filter, a clean injecting space, clean hands and an approved disposal bin.

1) Preparation



Choose a safe place to inject: one that is private, clean, well lit with running water, if possible.

Use soapy water to wipe down the surface where you'll prepare your hit or lay down the paper bag your equipment came in.



Make sure you have everything you need within reach: new sterile fits, new sterile water (or cooled boiled water in a clean glass), new swabs, a clean filter, clean spoon, and a clean tourniquet.

Wash your hands in warm soapy water. Hand washing is very important to remove viruses, bacteria, and plain old dirt from your injecting environment.



If you can't wash your hands use single wipes with new swabs to clean them. Rubbing swabs backwards and forwards spreads the dirt and bacteria around.

2) Mixing Up

Clean the spoon by wiping once with a new swab and let it dry. Put the drugs in the spoon.



Use your new sterile fit to draw up water from the new ampoule of sterile water (or cooled boiled water in a clean glass).



No matter how well it has been cleaned, never let your used equipment or anyone else's come into contact with a group mix. Unless new sterile fits are used to mix and divide up, each person must have all their own equipment.

Add the water to the spoon and mix. You can use the blunt end of your syringe, which you have swabbed clean with one wipe of a new swab, for mixing.



Add the filter to the spoon. The best filters are a bit of a new swab or tampon or a cotton bud.

If you are injecting pills, use pill filters if you can get them; if you can't get them, filter at least three times. Draw the solution up through the filter to remove impurities.



Remove air bubbles by pointing the needle skywards and flicking it on the side. Push the plunger up slowly until the air bubbles escape through the eye of the needle.

3) Injecting

Wipe the injection site once with a new swab.



Place the tourniquet around your upper arm (or above the injection site). Don't leave it on too long. If you have trouble finding a vein, release the tourniquet and try again.