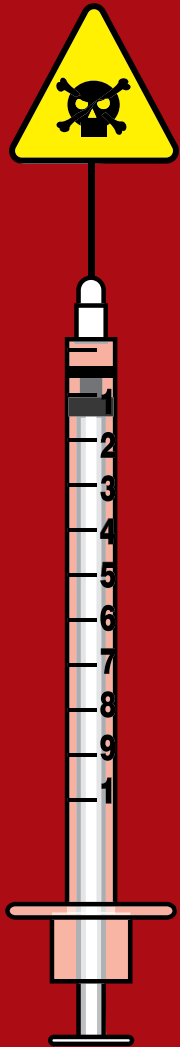


# WHEN THINGS GO WRONG



injecting problems & how to cope



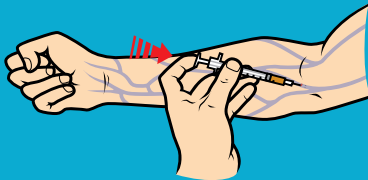
# What are Veins?

You have veins all over your body. They carry blood from your limbs and organs back to the heart

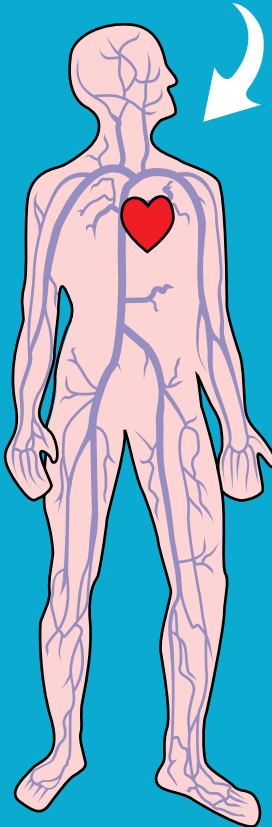


Veins are blue and have no pulse

Veins are filled with dark red blood



Drugs can be injected into some veins



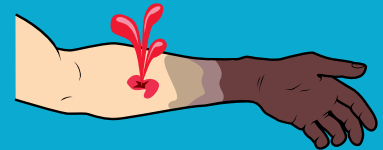
# What are Arteries?

You have arteries all over your body. They feed blood from the heart to your limbs and organs

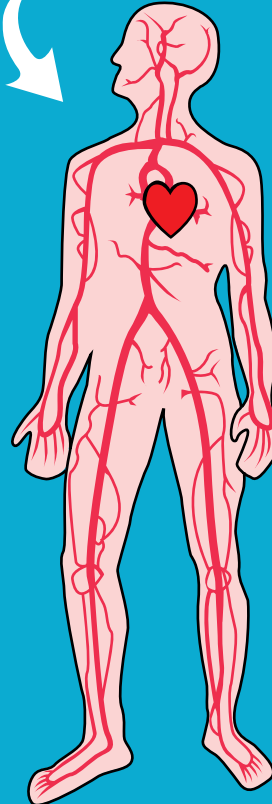


Arteries have a pulse

Arteries are filled with bright red, pinkish blood

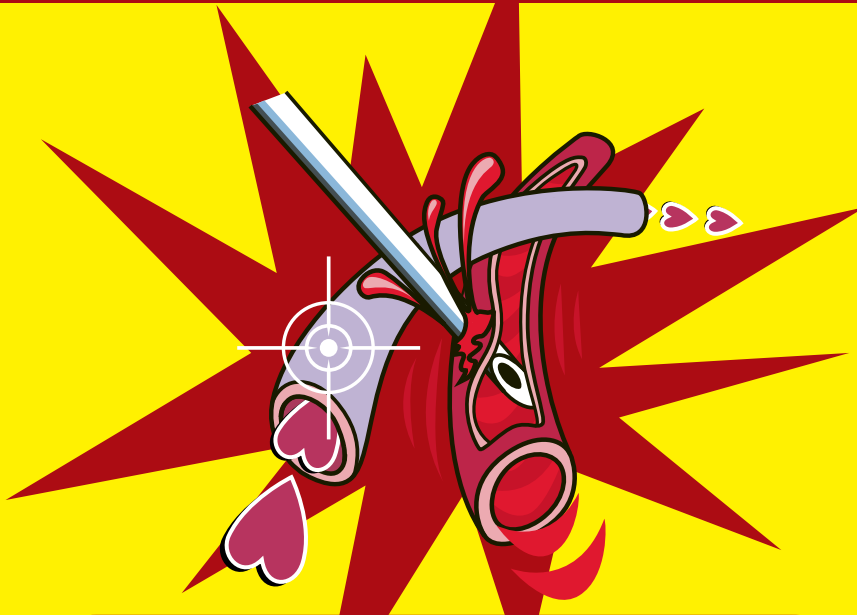


If you hit an artery, the part of your body it fed with blood could turn black and die



**NEVER inject into an artery**

# ARTERIES

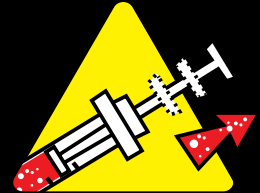


**If you miss a vein and hit an artery  
you can cause a lot of problems.  
You need to stop the bleeding  
and then get some help**

## Warning Signs



**Pain when you inject**



**Bright red blood that may  
push back the plunger**



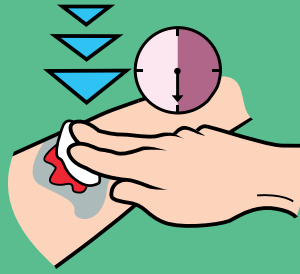
**Bleeding that may be  
hard to stop**



# ARTERIES

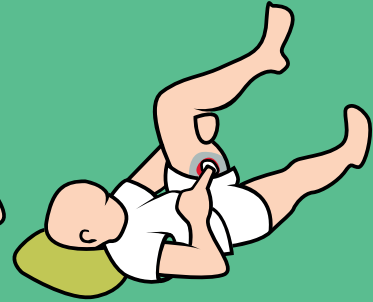
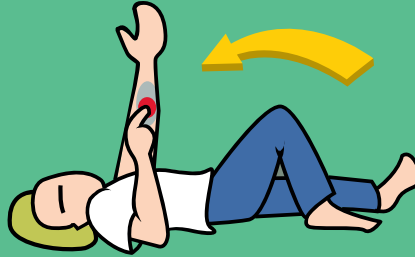
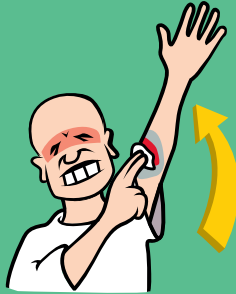
**Do**

**1**



Slide the needle out and apply pressure for 15—30 minutes to stop the bleeding. Use a clean paper tissue or sanitary towel

**2**



Raising the affected area and lying down will help to stop the bleeding

**3**



If the bleeding won't stop, call for an ambulance

**4**



Even if you stop the bleeding, it's best to get yourself checked out by a doctor as soon as you can

# Quick Guide

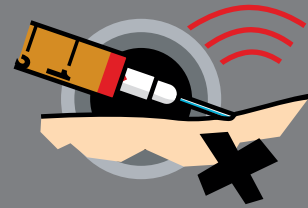
**Apply pressure**

**Raise the affected area and lie down**

**Call 999 if the bleeding won't stop**

**See a doctor even if the bleeding does stop**

# Don't



**DON'T inject if you see bright red blood or can feel a pulse.**

**If you hit an artery DON'T leave it to get better on its own - go see a doctor or ask at your needle exchange**



**If you don't act fast you could lose fingers, toes or a limb. You could even bleed to death**

# Avoiding Artery Damage

1

## Watch the Syringe

Gently draw back the plunger to check the needle is in a vein – a little **DARK** red blood should trickle into the syringe



If you see **BRIGHT** red or pink blood pushing its way into the syringe you have hit an artery. **DO NOT INJECT.** Remove the needle and apply pressure

2

## Don't Inject Tablets

Injecting crushed tablets (such as Temazepam, Cyclizine or Diconal) can cause severe damage. If you injected tablets into an artery you'd be in a lot of trouble



3

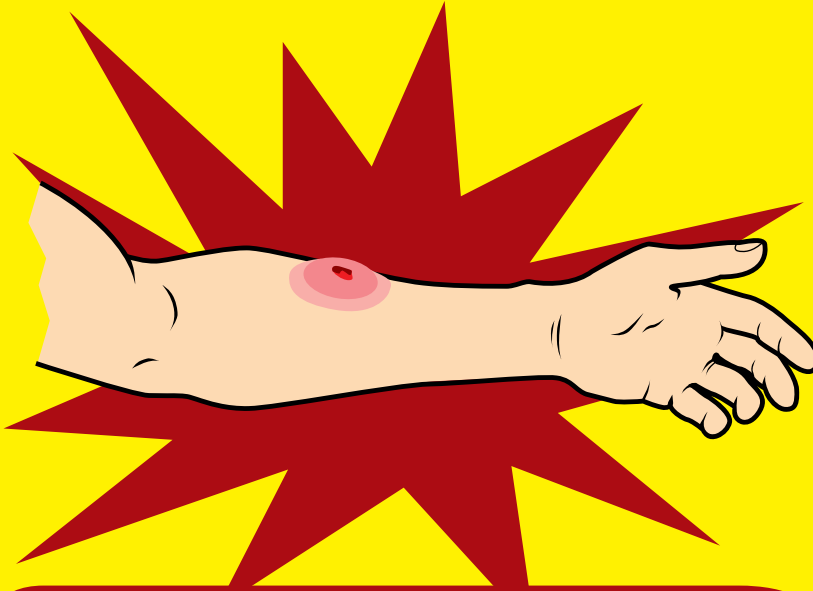
## Don't Go in the Groin

Injecting in the groin can be extremely dangerous. The vein in your groin is very close to your femoral artery. If you hit the femoral artery you could bleed to death or lose your leg. Going in the groin should be a last resort

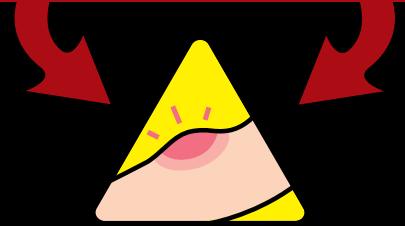


# ABSCESSSES

## Warning Signs



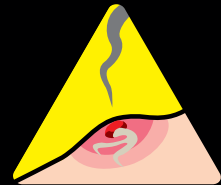
**An abscess is an infected lump, filled with pus, under your skin. They can be serious and need to be treated by a doctor**



**Swelling and redness (if you have pale skin)**



**Skin feels hot and/or tender**



**Pus discharge and a bad smell**



# ABSCESSSES

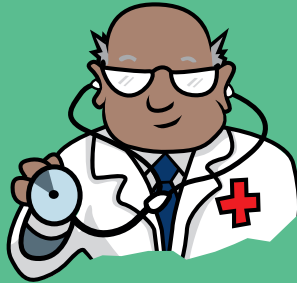
## Do

### 1



There's only one way to deal with an abscess: get to a doctor or ask for advice at your needle exchange

### 2



If you get treatment early enough, your doctor should be able to sort out the problem very easily

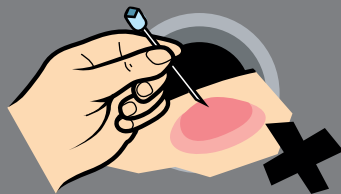
### 3



Your doctor can give you antibiotics to clear the infection or open the abscess to remove the pus

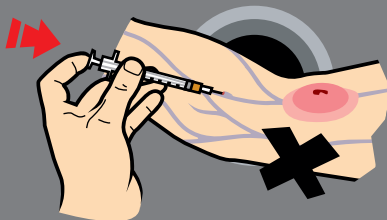


# Don't



**DON'T** try to lance an abscess yourself. You may spread the infection and cause problems

**DON'T** try to inject near a lump. Give that area a rest and use another site



**DON'T** leave an abscess to get better on its own. It's just as likely to get a lot worse. Get to a doctor or ask for help at your needle exchange

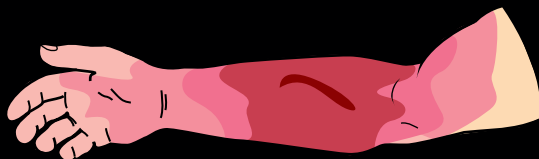


## Quick Guide

**Check the lump**

**Stop injecting in that area**

**Get to a doctor or ask at your needle exchange**



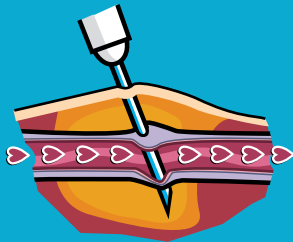
**If you don't get treatment quickly, infections like abscesses and cellulitis can cause very serious problems and illness**



# LUMPS

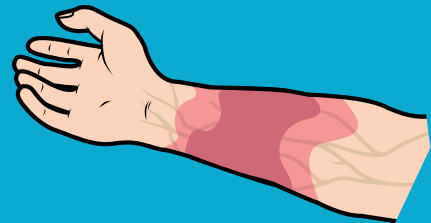
## Injecting Users Often Get Lumps Some Are Worse Than Others

Use the back of your fingers to feel around the lump. If it feels sore or warmer than the surrounding skin then it's probably infected and you need to see a doctor urgently



Missed hits often leave a lump. These usually vanish after a day or two. Give that area a rest and keep an eye on it. If it gets worse – or doesn't go away – get to the doctor

A spreading, painful and swollen area could be cellulitis. This can be serious and you should get to a doctor straight away



**If in doubt, ask at your needle exchange**

# Avoiding Problems

1

## Don't Share or Reuse

Used syringes, filters, swabs and water all carry bacteria that can cause infections and 'dirty hits'. Use them **ONCE** then discard. **Never share ANYTHING** you use to inject



2

## Stay Clean

Wash your hands and the place you are going to inject. Use hot water and soap

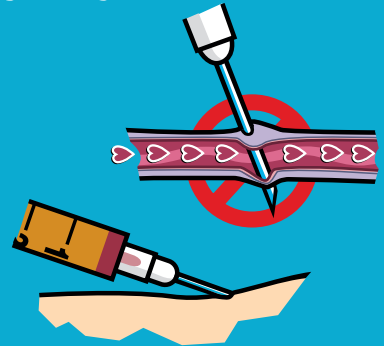


If you don't have soap and water a swab is better than nothing at all

3

## Watch Your Aim

Missed hits can cause lumps and abscesses. Make sure the needle is properly in a vein before you inject



Don't keep hitting the same spot. Rotate sites and give your veins a chance to heal

# 'DIRTY' HITS

## Warning Signs



**'Dirty hits' are caused by injecting bacteria into the blood. They can make you feel very ill but aren't dangerous if you sit it out and don't re-inject**



**Feeling very ill just after injecting**



**Shivering, sweating and a headache**

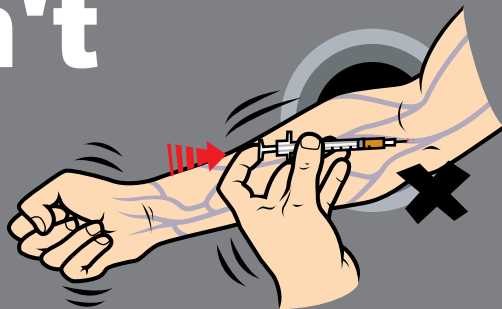
# Do



A 'bad hit' usually wears off after a few hours so it's probably best to just sit it out

If you don't start to feel better after a few hours or start to feel worse, get to a doctor

# Don't



However tempting it is, **DON'T** re-inject or take more drugs. The chances of overdosing are very high

## Quick Guide

**DON'T re-inject**

**Make yourself comfortable and sit it out**

**If you don't start to feel better after a few hours (or start to feel worse) get to a doctor**

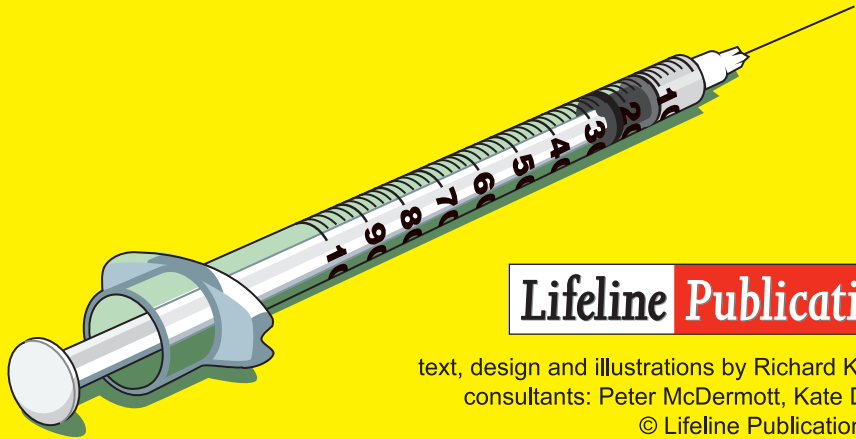
# Get it Checked Out!



**Injecting can cause all sorts of different problems. Most problems can be sorted out if you get help quickly. See your doctor and ask for advice and information at your needle exchange**

# STOP PRESS: INFECTED BATCH OF HEROIN

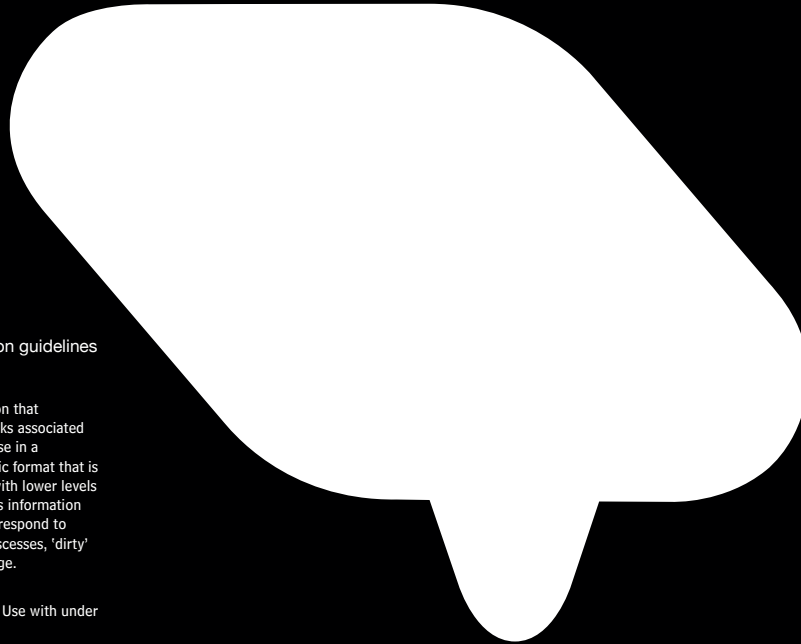
- Several cases of botulism have been reported in injectors
- Don't skin pop or inject heroin into muscle and be careful not to miss a vein
- Use as little citric acid as possible and don't share ANYTHING you use to inject with
- Infection symptoms begin with blurred vision and difficulties with speaking and swallowing
- Botulism can be successfully treated in most cases but it is a disease that can kill.  
If you experience symptoms get medical help straight away



**Lifeline Publications**

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consultants: Peter McDermott, Kate Dunkley  
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# For Further Information



[D5] lifeline | publication guidelines

[⇒] aims  
To provide information that highlights specific risks associated with injecting drug use in a predominantly graphic format that is accessible to those with lower levels of literacy. It includes information on how to avoid and respond to problems such as abscesses, 'dirty' hits and artery damage.

[>] audience  
Injecting drug users. Use with under 16's with support.

[✓] content  
No swearing. Illustrations of drug use.

[£] funding  
Self-financed.

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