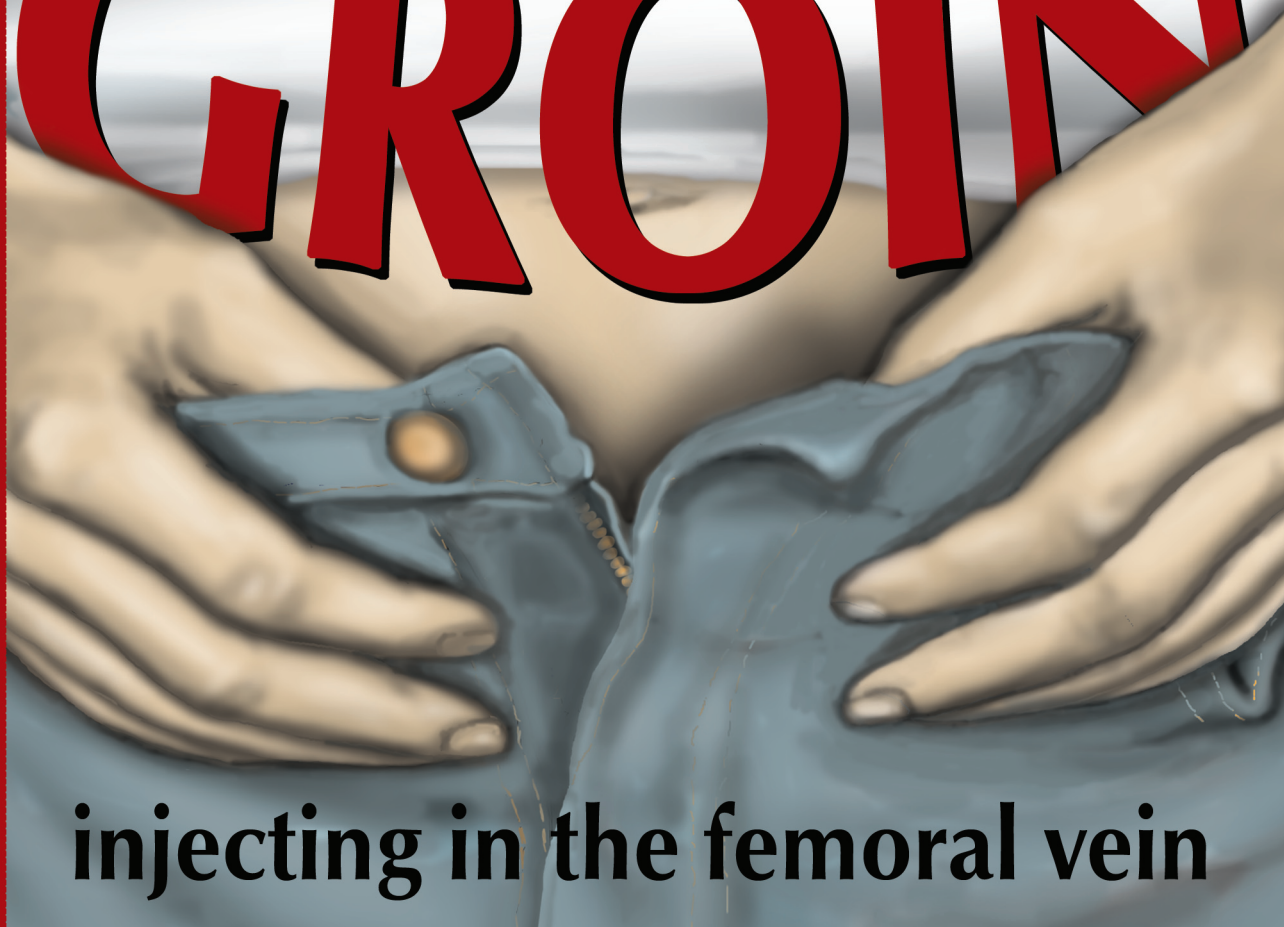


going in the
GROIN



injecting in the femoral vein

Why inject in the groin?

Going in the groin is about as safe as baboon wrestling, so why do people do it?

To hide the damage

Some people inject in the groin to hide their habit from friends, relatives, hostel workers etc. Needle marks and scarring on the arms are mostly down to bad injection technique and are avoidable if you learn good technique—ask at your drug service for advice.

Nowhere else to go

Some people go in the groin because they have run out of other places to dig. If you can't find a vein somewhere safer than your groin maybe it's time to think about giving your body a rest. Try smoking for a while or get an oral methadone script. If you still want to inject or don't feel able to stop, drop into your drug service and ask for advice on finding a better place to dig.

Injecting in the groin should be a last resort.

Not understanding the risks

If everyone around you is going in the groin it can be easy to think of it as a normal and safe way to inject.

Understanding the risks (and not giving a fuck)

Some people just like wrestling baboons...

Contents

pages 3-4

Anatomy lesson
Veins, Arteries and Nerves,
The Groin

pages 5-6

Vein problems
DVT,
Infections

pages 7-9

Artery problems
Hitting an artery,
Artery blockages,
Gangrene, Aneurysm

page 9

Nerve hits

pages 10-11

Warning signs

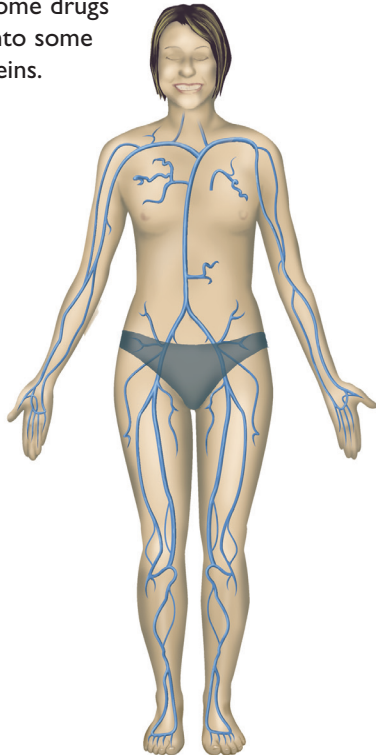
pages 12-15

Safer injection
Picking a pin
Position,
Going in the groin

1. Anatomy lesson

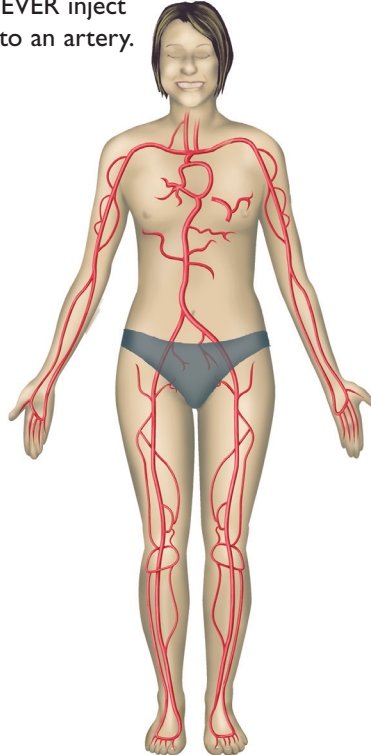
Veins

You have veins all over your body. They carry blood from your limbs and organs back to your heart. You can inject some drugs into some veins.



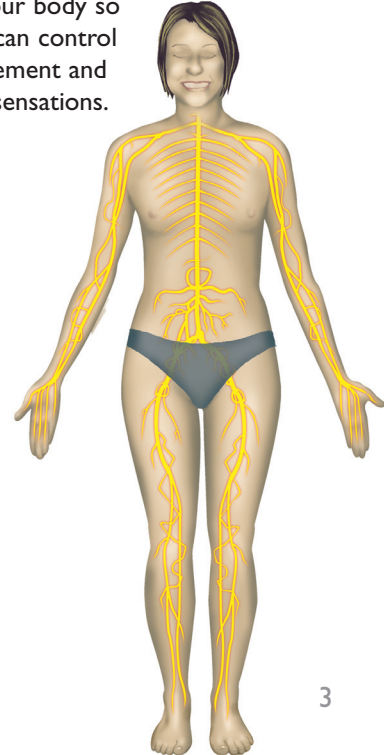
Arteries

You have arteries all over your body. They feed blood from your heart to your limbs and organs. NEVER inject into an artery.



Nerves

You have nerves all over your body. Nerves carry messages back and forth from your brain to the rest of your body so you can control movement and feel sensations.



The Groin



This is your femoral vein. . .

...it is one of the biggest veins in your body. It returns nearly all of the blood from your leg back to your heart and lungs. Despite the risk of serious health problems, some drug users choose to inject into the femoral vein.



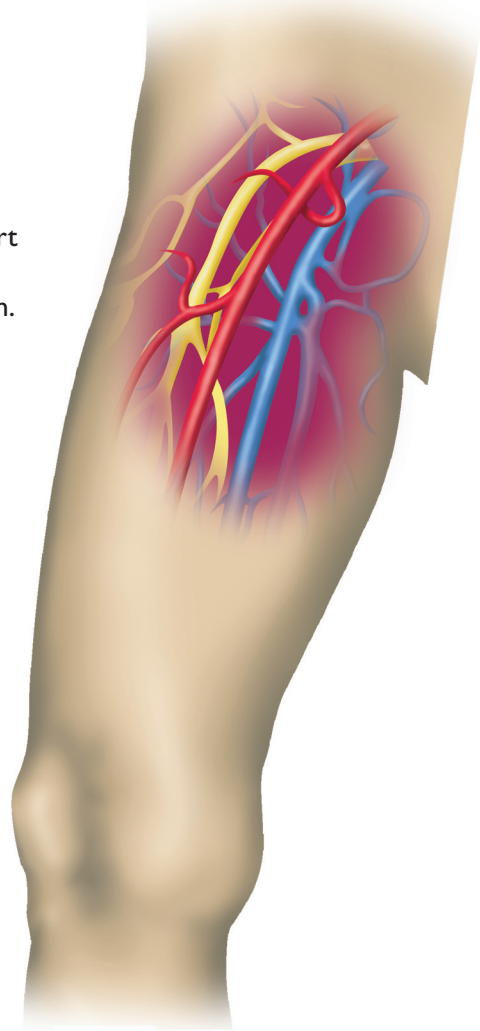
This is your femoral artery. . .

...it is one of the biggest arteries in your body. It supplies nearly all the blood to your leg. You need this artery. Without it, your leg would die and drop off – if you hit it by accident you could be in BIG trouble. You can find the artery by feeling for the pulse in your groin.



This is your femoral nerve...

...it passes messages back and forth between your brain and leg so you can control movement and feel pain and touch. If you hit it with a needle you will be in a lot of pain and could even be paralysed.



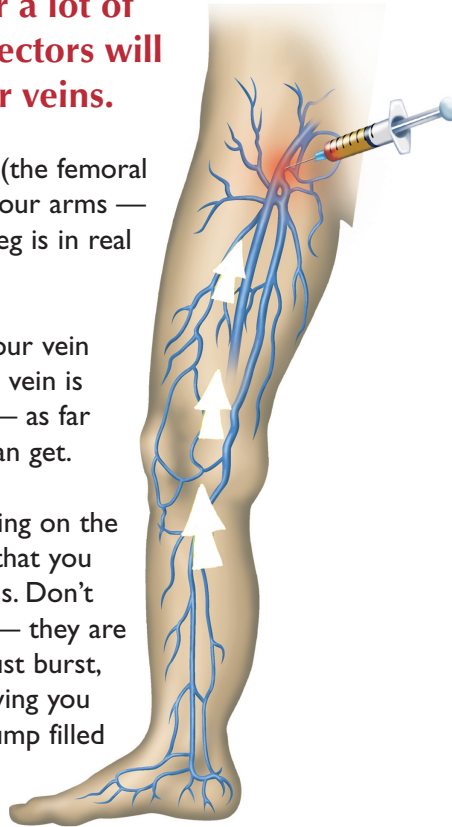
2. Vein problems

Injecting in the groin means ALL the veins in your leg suffer a lot of abuse. Most groin injectors will have trouble with their veins.

The vein buried in your groin (the femoral vein) is not like the veins on your arms — if you kill it then your whole leg is in real danger.

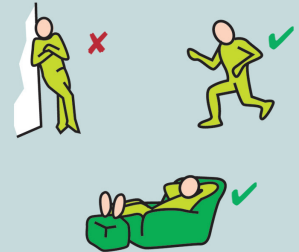
If it becomes harder to find your vein then you have damaged it. The vein is moving deeper into your leg — as far away from your needle as it can get.

New or varicose veins appearing on the surface of your leg are a sign that you have damaged the deeper veins. Don't try to inject these new veins — they are very weak and will probably just burst, wasting the hit and maybe leaving you with an abscess (an infected lump filled with pus).



top tips for looking after your veins

- ✗ Try not to stand still for long periods
- ✓ Put your feet up to take the pressure off whenever possible
- ✓ Take a little exercise whenever you can — even a brisk walk will help

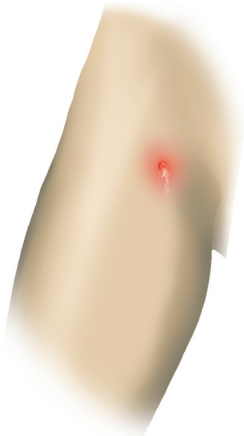
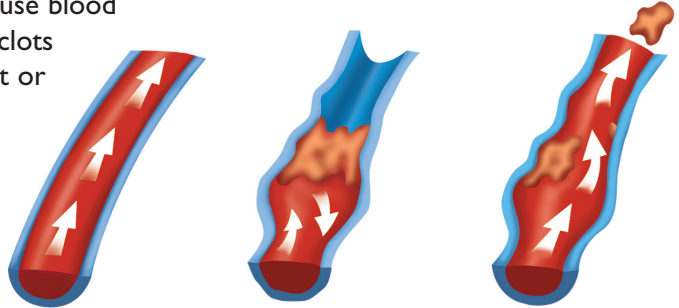


Deep vein thrombosis

Damaging your veins can kill you

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a common problem for groin injectors. Needle damage can cause blood clots which can block the vein — if these clots break free and find their way to your heart or lungs you could die.

Watch out for swelling, pain and redness (particularly in the back of the legs) — these are all signs of DVT. If you think you may have a problem get to the doctor to get treatment as soon as you can.



Infections

An infection in the groin can be very serious. Because the vein in your groin is buried so deep it can be hard to spot trouble before it is too late....

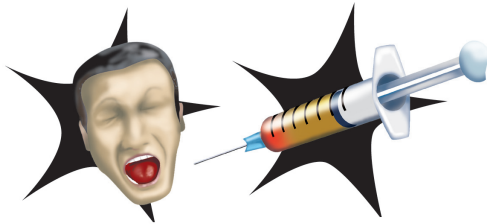
Watch out for redness, swelling or tenderness at, or near, the injection site. If there is discharge (smelly gunk) coming from the wound then you are definitely in trouble. If you think you have a problem STOP injecting there and get to a doctor if things don't improve fast.

3. Artery problems

Hitting an artery

Your leg needs your femoral artery to survive and an accidental hit can cause real problems.

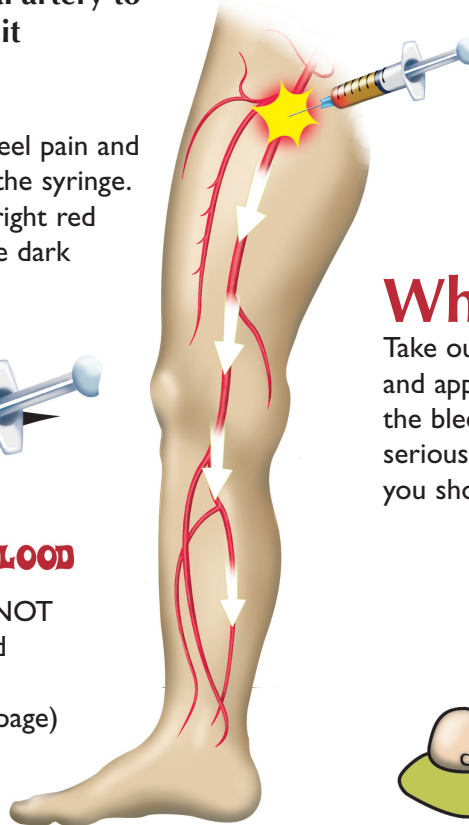
If you hit your artery you may feel pain and see blood pushing its way into the syringe. The blood in your artery is a bright red colour — more pinkish than the dark blood in your vein.



PAIN

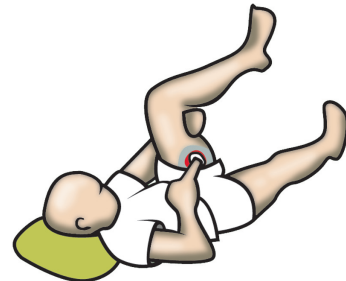
BRIGHT RED BLOOD

If you hit an artery you **MUST NOT INJECT**. The drug would be fired down your leg where it could cause a blockage (see the next page)

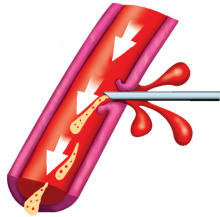
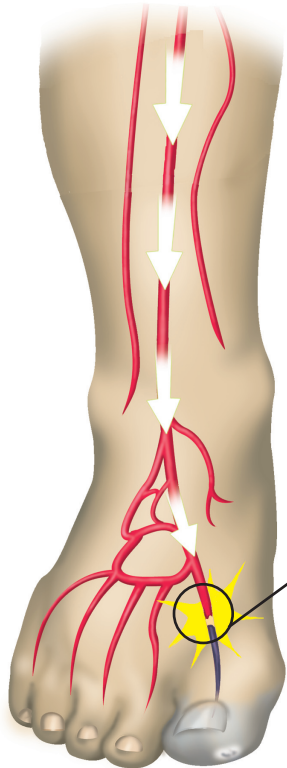


What to do...

Take out the pin, raise your leg and apply firm pressure to stop the bleeding. If the bleeding is serious and won't stop then you should call an ambulance.



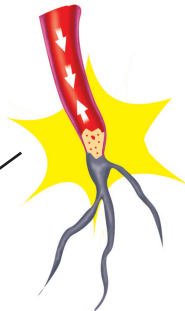
Artery blockages



Drug particles or blood clots can travel down the leg and block smaller arteries, starving parts of your leg or foot of blood.

An artery blockage means difficult and complicated surgery.

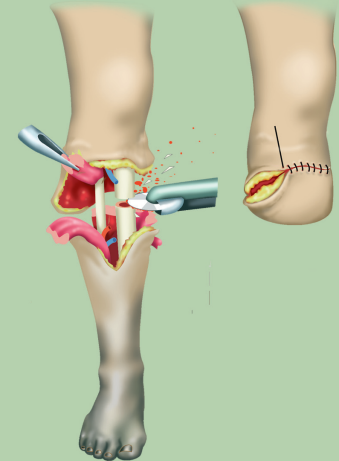
Signs of a blockage are discolouration, ulcers, pain and swelling. If you think you may have a problem, get to a doctor as soon as you can.



A blocked artery is bad news...

Gangrene

A bad blockage can cause gangrene which spreads quickly. Gangrene is where parts of your body die and start to rot. Once gangrene has set in, amputation is usually the only option.

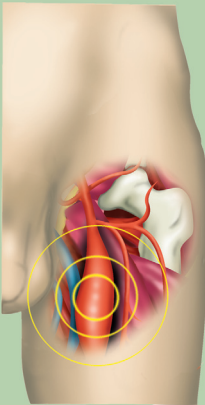


It just gets worse and worse...

Aneurysm

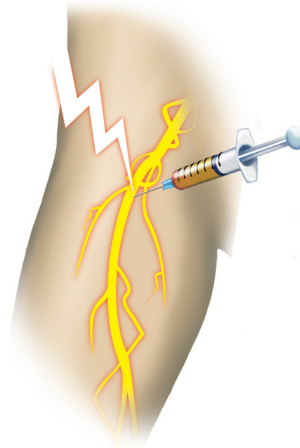
Hitting your artery can cause an **aneurysm**.

An aneurysm is where the walls of the artery blow up like a bloody balloon. Thankfully this is relatively rare as it is very difficult to spot and can lead to amputation or death.



4. Nerve hits

Hitting your nerve can leave you with a permanent loss of feeling in your leg or even paralysis



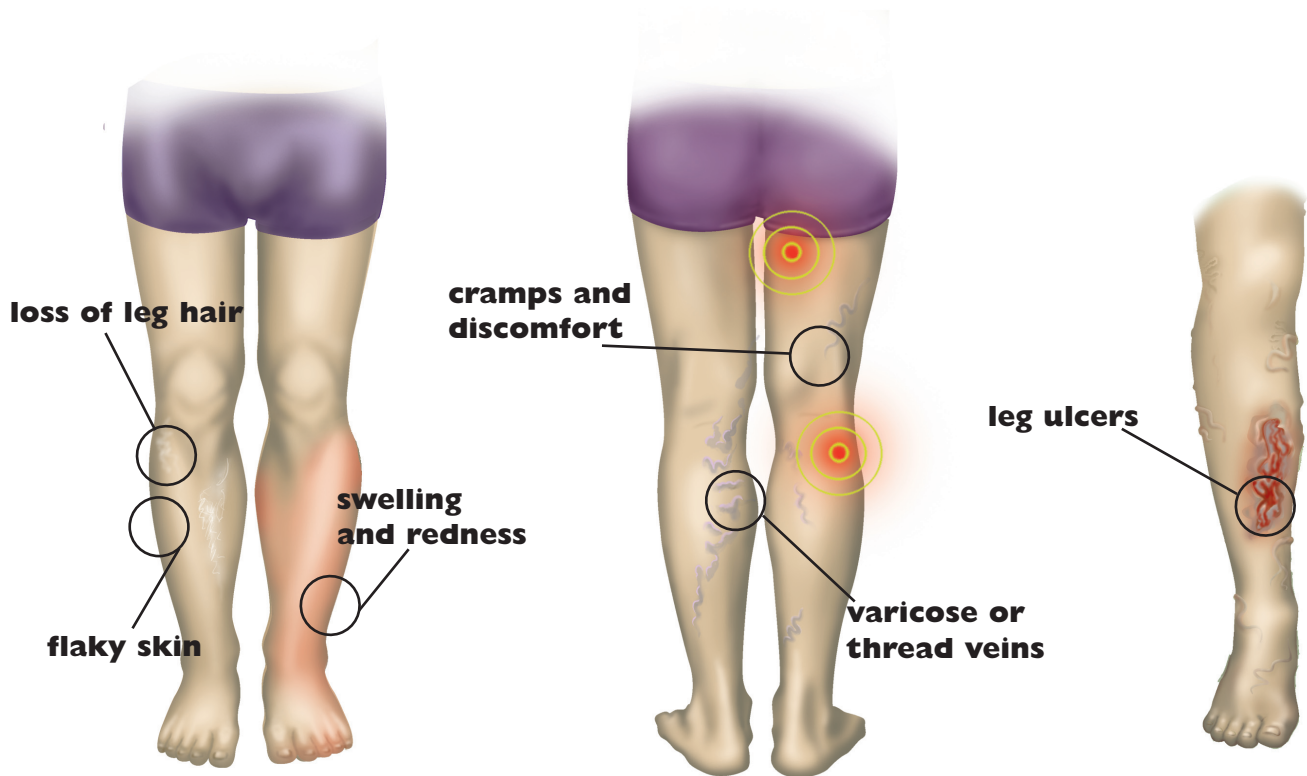
You'll know if you hit your nerve - it feels like a cattle prod's been rammed up your arse. Nerve damage rarely heals completely and is difficult or impossible to treat. The only thing to do is to be very careful with your aim and don't take chances.

5. Warning signs

If you jab a needle into your groin three times a day you can expect to run into serious problems, either now or later in life. We don't mean to frighten you but this really is scary stuff. If you do get any of the following symptoms get them checked out by a doctor as they won't get better on their own.

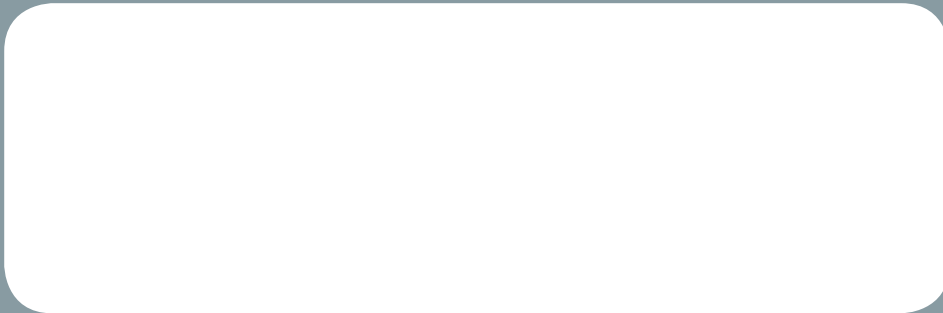
Any one of these symptoms could mean you are reaching the end of the line as a groin injector. It's time to visit your drug service for help on finding a safer place to inject. Think about smoking instead or consider an oral methadone script.

- any sort of redness, swelling or tenderness at, or near, the injection site.
- any discharge (smelly gunk) coming from a wound.
- an abscess (an infected lump filled with pus).
- loss of leg hair
- flaky skin
- swelling and redness in any part of your leg
- cramps and discomfort
- varicose or thread veins



An ulcer is an oozing, smelly, infected wound that doesn't heal for weeks or even months. Once you have suffered a leg ulcer you can expect it to return again and again – a bit like a giant cold sore.

FOR FURTHER HELP AND ADVICE



[D8 0401] lifeline | publication guidelines

[>] **aims**
To provide information for current injectors in a predominantly graphic format that is accessible to those with lower levels of literacy. It is designed to deter current injectors from injecting in the groin, and to provide a step-by-step guide for existing femoral injectors highlighting the relevant dangers at each stage.

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

[v] **content**
Some swearing, graphic illustrations of drug use

[£] **funding**
Self-financed

