

# HARM REDUCTION IN HEROIN USE:

## an informational sheet on vein care & abscesses

Heroin doses are usually cut with material such as sugar and milk based substances, like pancake batter, and vitamins but also material that is harmful to the vein, like meat tenderizer.

Due to bad cuts, vein problems appear in users. This is especially visible in MA where vein calcification and collapse occur within the first 2 years of use. There is no known way to prevent vein calcification other than using heroin with a high level of purity.

Wounds from shooting should be kept as clean as possible to prevent infection. Alcohol and antibiotic cream should be applied to the wound and then covered with a bandaid. Alcohol, antibiotic cream, and bandaids can be found at harm reduction centers.

Some veins are particularly prone to infection such as veins in the feet, legs, chest and groin. Wounds in these areas should be kept particularly clean and covered. Clean socks should always be worn if there is a wound on the foot.

If possible, veins should be rotated. This will give the vein time to heal.

Vitamin E helps replenish veins and skin.

Vitamin K helps wounds to heal faster and not scar.

An abscess, or cellulitis, happens when a vein is missed, or is too small for a shot and bursts upon shooting. To prevent this, veins can be made to rise or enlarge through the application of heat, such as a warm shower, or exercise, such as swinging ones arms or using weights.

An abscess appears when the dose enters into the skin or muscle causing an infection. The area where this happens should be kept extremely clean with alcohol and antibiotics and will oftentimes heal itself.

If the abscess does not heal itself it can be lanced, or punctured, and the puss drained with a sterile needle. This area should be thoroughly cleaned and covered.

If the infection is really bad a doctor should be seen. The doctor will most likely already know the cause of the infection. Whether or not the doctor approves, the patient has the right to invoke confidentiality regarding use. **The patient should discuss their habit when seeking medical care to avoid misdiagnoses and for medication purposes.**