

Injecting tips



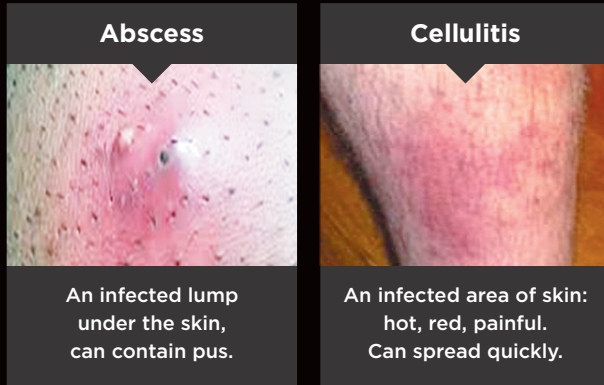
Preventing and caring
for bacterial infections



What are they?

Bacterial infections are caused by bacteria getting under the skin.

Common are:



Why should I care?

Bacterial infections can **HURT!**
They can also make you **VERY ILL.**

Signs of a serious infection:

- ! High temperature (fever)
- ! Chills and shivering
- ! Feeling dizzy
- ! Difficulty breathing
- ! Headaches and muscle pain

If you have any of these symptoms, you need to get to hospital **QUICK!**

Your life could be at risk.



What can I do to prevent them?

Bacteria can be on:

Skin: everyone has bacteria on their skin.

Wipe or wash your hands and injecting sites before injecting. Alcohol swabs are best for injecting sites, soap and water or baby wipes also fine.

Equipment: bacteria can grow on used injecting equipment.

- **Try and use new syringes for every hit.**
If you can't, wash out old syringes with cold water and bleach (if you have it).
- **Throw out old filters.** Used filters grow bacteria – use a new one every time! Tearing filters in half risks fibres in your mix – this can also make you sick.
- **Water can contain bacteria, especially if shared.**
Best is a water amp, boiled and cooled water or cold tap water. Next, bottled water (not drunk from).

"I'd never had a dirty hit (or infection) ... I always have alcohol swabs and wipes with me and even if you're inside a bin shed just make yourself a clean area, put down a newspaper, tissues if you've got it, keep it clean and I'm just a survivor, I've more lives than the cat!"



Henry, long-term street homeless

Your spit: saliva has heaps of bacteria!

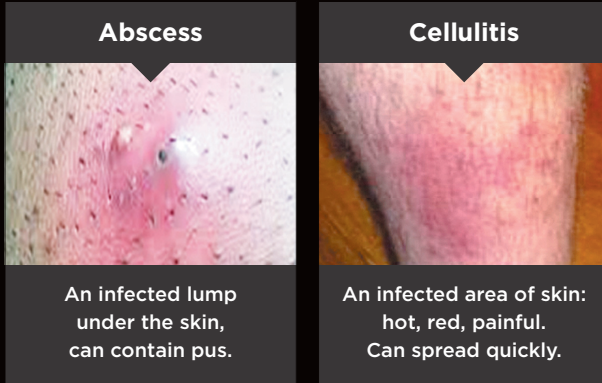
Don't lick your needle or your injection site, or let spit near your drug mix.

Injecting saliva can make you really sick.

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What about missed hits?

No-one likes a missed hit!

Missing a vein not only can ruin your hit, but can cause skin infections. The best way to avoid missed hits is to look after your veins.

Some tips

Acids: use as little citric or vit C as possible. Half a sachet is more than enough for most injections.

Water and warmth: keep hydrated (drink plenty of water) and try inject somewhere warm: both help veins come up.

Rotate your sites: get familiar with using different veins – give your best one a rest!

Take it slowly: not easy if you have to inject in a public place, but try find a space with decent light and where you can take your time.

Have a smoke: If you are in withdrawal and can smoke or snort a bit first, this might calm you so you can get a hit easier.

Take a break: Smoke, snort, swallow or shaft (up ya bum!) are good alternatives to injecting. Give your veins a rest.

“The more aggravated you get, the more stressful it gets to find a vein and then you end up skin popping it, that’s how you get an abscess.”

 Jade

What if I do have an infection?

Do your best to keep it clean and get it seen.

You can go to:

A pharmacist, your keyworker, your GP, drug service nurse, or someone at A&E.

Seen quickly = sorted quickly

“I went to A&E, because I had a fever and everything, so I said listen, I’m going to go to the hospital now, I just chose to go because I couldn’t take another day or two of the pain and the abscess needed to be cut out.”

 Jade

A new script of antibiotics will usually do the trick (don’t reuse old ones!).

If you have any signs of a serious infection (see page 1) get to a hospital **QUICK!**

“I spent 5 weeks in hospital with endocarditis (heart infection), I’ve never been so sick in all my life, it was horrible and from having endocarditis I know that it only takes a tiny little bit of dirt to get into your system.”

 Ross



Where to go for quick, easy access, local health care?

Ask a service provider to fill in the box.

Developed in collaboration:

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Quotes from: Care & Prevent Study.

Names are fake.

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Groundswell

OUT OF HOMELESSNESS

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