

ROUTES OF ADMINISTRATION

INTRODUCTION

Drugs are taken in a number of different ways. The effects of different drugs can be powerful and absorption into the body especially from smoking or injecting is fast. There are different risks associated with using particular drugs and the way in which they are used.

SNORTING

Snorting can use a variety of implements (eg rolled-up bank note, straw, empty biro, etc) is probably the most common way powdered forms of drugs are taken. Both the snorting equipment and the drug can damage the delicate lining of the nose.

To help reduce the chance of damage to your nostrils:

- Finely chop the powder before inhaling.
- Alternate nostrils and
- Rinse the nostrils out after snorting.

Hepatitis C can be passed on from tiny, often invisible, amounts of blood on shared snorting equipment.

Always use your own snorting equipment and keep it away from other people's so they don't get mixed up.

Using post it notes with your name on is an easy way to keep track of your own equipment.

SWALLOWING (BOMBING)

Drugs are sometimes swallowed. Swallowing causes irritation as the drug travels to the stomach.

To reduce the chance of irritation:

- Dissolve the drug in a small amount of warm water, or
- Wrap it in cigarette paper before swallowing it.

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VEINS AND VEIN CARE

Frequent injecting in the same place can lead the vein tissue to become inflamed, increasing the risk of scarring, abscesses, and vein collapse. The best way to avoid vein damage is not to inject, or to use the drug another way. If this isn't an option for you then there are a number of things you can do.

TO REDUCE THE RISK OF VEIN DAMAGE:

- Give the veins time to recover between injections.
- Rotate injecting sites from arm to arm and up and down the same arm.

TO INCREASE THE SIZE OF THE VEINS TO MAKE INJECTING EASIER:

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- Have a hot shower or apply a hot washcloth to the injecting site for a few minutes, and/or pump your hand or arm up and down to increase blood flow.

SHAFTING (SHELVING, STUFFING)

Sometimes drugs are shafted (inserted into the arse). This method of use is often associated with sex play. Shafting can have a strong laxative effect.

Drugs that are shafted directly, may burn the lining of the arse. Damage to the lining of the arse can increase the chances of HIV and hepatitis C being transmitted.

TO REDUCE THE CHANCES OF BURNING THE LINING OF THE ARSE:

- Dissolve the crystal in warm water and squirt into the arse using a clean barrel (without the tip!) discard of this in a sharps bin and do not share with anyone or
- Wrap it in cigarette paper before inserting into the arse.

Washing your hands before and after shafting is important to prevent transmission of a range of faecal (shit) borne diseases like hepatitis A and shigella.

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SMOKING (CHASING)

Smoking or inhaling a drug has grown in popularity since the emergence of the methamphetamine particularly the crystalline form.

Glass pipes used to smoke drugs can become very hot and cause burns to mouth or gums, or have sharp edges if they are damaged.

Sometimes crystal is also smoked on aluminium foil, or the base of soft drink cans, often because glass pipes are not available – these can also cause cuts or burns. These types of injuries can make hepatitis C transmission possible if equipment is shared.

INJECTING

Injecting means effects are felt quickly, almost as quickly as smoking, which has the fastest effects. Injecting any drug can involve risk of HIV and Hepatitis C transmission. To prevent the transmission of HIV or Hepatitis C when injecting:

- Use your own equipment and ensure everyone else has their own including water, filters, spoons and tourniquets as well as needles.
- Make sure there is plenty of equipment available – more than you think you might need. Free injecting equipment is available at ACON and at needle and syringe programs. You can also buy injecting equipment at some pharmacies.

When two people who are HIV positive (or hepatitis C positive) and share injecting equipment, they risk getting a different strain of the virus. Some strains of HIV and hepatitis C can have a more serious effect on someone's health. Hepatitis C is easier to get or pass on than HIV. Someone who is HIV positive also risks co-infection with hepatitis C if they share injecting equipment with someone who is hepatitis C positive.

Co-infection with HIV and Hepatitis C can make both infections more difficult to treat, because Hepatitis C can damage the liver, making it harder for HIV medications to work, as they are absorbed into the bloodstream via the liver.

Injecting can allow bacteria to enter the body and cause abscesses and blood infections like endocarditis.

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TO REDUCE THE CHANCE OF INJECTING IMPURITIES:

- Use sterile water.
- Draw up the dissolved solution through a small ball of cotton wool or other filter prior to injecting.
- Draw up from a spoon as there's less chance of spilling mixture onto a surface that might not be clean or sterile.
- If you have to mix in the deal bag be careful not to tear or puncture the bag.
- If possible, try to prepare over a surface you've wiped or cleaned before mixing in case the bag tears or the mixture escapes.

TO REDUCE THE CHANCE OF INFECTIONS:

- Wash your hands before and after injecting yourself or helping others.
- Wipe the injecting site (as well as your hands and other equipment) with an alcohol swab and
- Clean or cover the surfaces that any equipment will come in contact with.

Before injecting, the drug is dissolved in water – this is called “mixing”. If the drug doesn't mix well it might not be very pure.



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