

# Injecting with less risk



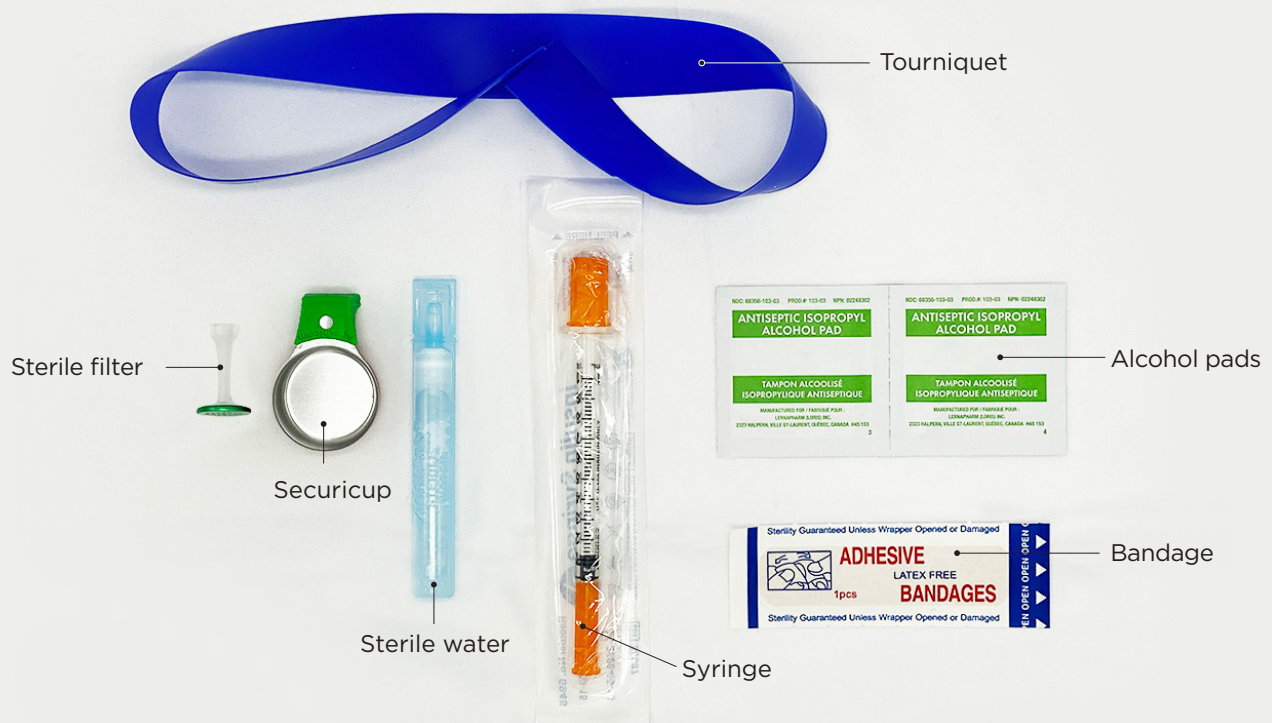
Injecting drugs or other substances without taking certain precautions can have serious health consequences. Here's some useful information on how to do it more safely and how to recognize warning signs and emergency signs.

## What are the risks?

- Infections of the skin (cellulitis or abscesses), blood (septicemia), and heart (endocarditis)
- Blood clots and their sometimes serious complications
- Overdoses
- HIV and hepatitis B and C viruses

## What equipment do I need?

This equipment is free at supervised consumption sites. It's also available in pharmacies at low cost. See page 6 for access locations.



## How can you reduce health risks?

Every time you inject:

- 1 Wash your hands** before handling injection equipment.
- 2 Disinfect your skin** with a new alcohol pad.
- 3 Use new equipment:** needle, syringe, sterile filter (better than a cotton filter), sterile water (not tap or bottled water), and securicup.
- 4 Prepare the substance properly:** crush it to the finest powder possible and dilute it in sterile water, in the securicup. Heat the solution for 15 seconds and allow to cool before injecting.
- 5 Apply a clean, dry bandage** afterwards.



### ATTENTION

**Don't lick the needle or the skin at the injection site.** The mouth contains many bacteria that could end up in your bloodstream and cause a dangerous infection.

**Never share injection equipment.** For crack or crystal meth pipes, use a tip to share them safely.

**Dispose of used equipment safely.** You can obtain a container at a pharmacy or a supervised consumption site.



**Overdose can lead to death. To avoid overdose:**

- Don't mix drugs.
- Use with someone else or in a supervised setting.
- Note any changes in the product you buy (for example, the colour isn't the same). This could be a sign of contamination with a more dangerous product. If in doubt, you can have it analyzed. Ask at a supervised consumption site (see page 4).
- Always carry naloxone with you. It blocks the effect of opioids for a while.



**Naloxone is available free of charge from your pharmacy.** You don't need a doctor's prescription. Just ask your pharmacist. But be careful! It should only be taken to treat an overdose.



Long-acting opioids (sometimes called "contins" or "hydro") cause more infections than other substances. This is due to the bead coating in the capsule. Even if you remove it, some will remain. For this reason, it's not advisable to inject them.

## What are the risks associated with a “wash”?


**Using the residuals from an injection is not a good idea!** This practice of using the residual drug, called a “wash”, increases the risk of blood clots and bacterial infection. If you take someone else’s residuals, the risk is even greater. The container or used filter may be contaminated. You could catch a virus such as HIV or hepatitis C.



## How can I find out if I have hepatitis C or HIV?

You will need to have a blood test. This can be done at your local community service centre (CLSC) or at a supervised consumption site (see Useful Resources, page 5).

## What should I do if I have a problem?

Here are some signs you need to be aware of, and how to deal with them if they occur.


Warning signs	The cause	What to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A vein used becomes hard, and the skin around it is red and warm.</li><li>• Sometimes, the skin looks like orange peel, or there is a build-up of pus.</li></ul>	These are signs of bacterial infection.	Apply a cold compress. See a doctor if symptoms worsen, for example, if the redness spreads or you develop a fever (over 38°C or 100.4°F).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Skin becomes red and swollen near the injection site.</li></ul>	These can be signs of a blood clot.	Apply a warm compress and see a doctor if the symptoms don’t subside.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fever with chills about 30 minutes after injection</li><li>• Rapid heartbeat</li><li>• Headache</li><li>• Heartburn and vomiting</li></ul>	<p>This could be <b>cotton fever</b>, which is a very unpleasant experience, sometimes worse than withdrawal.</p> <p>Cotton fever is caused by a toxin in a cotton filter. If the filter is worn or unraveled, the risk is greater.</p> <p><b>Always use a new sterile filter</b> to prevent cotton fever.</p>	<p>You can take acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) to reduce the fever. Don’t exceed the maximum dose.</p> <p>If you still have fever after 24 hours, see a doctor or go to the emergency room.</p> 

 Emergency signs	The cause	What to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bloody sputum</li> <li>• Shortness of breath</li> <li>• Difficulty breathing</li> <li>• Chest pain</li> </ul>	A blood clot may have blocked an important vein.	Call <b>911</b> or go to the nearest hospital emergency room.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult, slow, or irregular breathing</li> <li>• Blue lips and nails</li> <li>• Cold skin</li> <li>• Very small pupils</li> <li>• Dizziness</li> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Very strong desire to sleep or no reaction</li> </ul>	These are signs of an opioid overdose.	Someone should give you naloxone, then call <b>911</b> or take you to the nearest hospital emergency room. 

## Who can I contact for help or if I have questions?

Feel free to talk with a member of your care team, or staff at the supervised consumption sites, or even with street workers.

CHUM Addiction Medicine Clinic:

 **514 890-8321**



## USEFUL RESOURCES

Other CHUM health fact sheets are available. Ask your care team which fact sheets can help you.



You can also read them online.

[chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante](http://chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante)

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To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal  
**chumontreal.qc.ca**



To find out where to obtain injection equipment and where to go for help or services.

### Supervised consumption sites (SCS) – fixed sites

These are places where you can bring your drugs and inject them safely and legally. You'll be given new equipment. There are qualified personnel on site, such as a nurse.

Here you can also obtain other services, such as:

- Sexually transmitted infections (STI) screening
- Contraception
- Vaccination
- Wound care
- Listening and support, referral to other services as needed
- Product analysis

These services are provided through the joint efforts of the healthcare network and community organizations.

In Montreal, you can go to one of these addresses:

#### Cactus

1244 Berger Street  
Centre-Ville (Saint-Laurent metro station)

Open every day from 2:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m.

☎ 514 847-0067

#### Dopamine

4205 Ontario Street East  
Hochelaga-Maisonneuve (Pie-IX metro station)

Open every day from 8:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.

☎ 514 251-8872

#### Spectre de rue

1278 Ontario Street East  
Centre-Sud (Beaudry metro station)

Open every day from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

☎ 514 528-1700

### Supervised consumption sites (SCS) – mobile site

You can also call the following mobile unit, at the number indicated. This service is on the road at night in certain Montreal neighbourhoods, at the times specified.



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#### L'Anonyme

Open Monday to Thursday from 6:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., and every night from 10:45 p.m. to 4:30 a.m.

☎ 1 844 381-2455

Neighbourhoods served: Centre-Ville, Centre-Sud, Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, Centre-Ouest, Sud-Ouest.



**ATTENTION!**

Consumption site schedules are subject to change.

## Access to new injection equipment

You can obtain equipment anonymously at the following locations:

- a supervised consumption site (SCS)
- an injection equipment access centre (CAMI)

To find out where your nearest CAMI is, you can do a search on this Web page:

[sante.gouv.qc.ca/en/repertoire-ressources/cami](https://sante.gouv.qc.ca/en/repertoire-ressources/cami)

## Support and information

### Drug – Help and referral:

Telephone support line, available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week. Free and confidential.

☎ 1 800 265-2626

[aidedroque.ca/en/](https://aidedroque.ca/en/)

**Hope for Wellness Helpline**, for all Indigenous people:

☎ 1 855 242-3310

[hopeforwellness.ca](https://hopeforwellness.ca)

### Administering naloxone

[inspq.qc.ca/en/](https://inspq.qc.ca/en/)

Type “naloxone” in the search box, then click on “Naloxone administration”



## USEFUL RESOURCES

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You can also read them online.

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## NOTEPAD



### Questions




### Resource people and contacts


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