

safer use practices FOR DRUG USER HEALTH

WHAT IS DRUG USER HEALTH?

- » Refers to policies, programs, and practices that aim to minimize negative health, social, and legal impacts associated with drug use.
- » Grounded in **justice** and **human rights**, it focuses on positive change and working with people without judgment, discrimination, or requiring that they stop using drugs.
- » Offers a set of practical strategies that **reduce negative consequences of drug use**, incorporating a spectrum of strategies from safer use to managed use to abstinence.



GOALS OF DRUG USER HEALTH

- » Keep people alive and encourage positive change in their lives.
- » Reduce the harm and minimize the risks associated with drug use.
- » Offer a set of practical strategies that **reduce the negative consequences of drug use**, incorporating a spectrum of strategies from safer use to managed use to abstinence.



GENERAL DRUG USER HEALTH TIPS

- » **DO NOT USE ALONE.**
- » Test substances for fentanyl, Xylazine, Medetomidine, and Benzodiazepines.
- » Start low, go slow.
- » Avoid mixing drugs.
- » Stay hydrated.
- » **ALWAYS** carry Naloxone.

ABOUT DC ENGAGE

DC Engage, led by HealthHIV with funding from DC Health, strengthens the capacity of aspiring or established community-based organizations and peer-led coalitions in Washington, DC, that serve people who use drugs. Learn more at DCEngage.org.

SAFER INJECTING

- Less Dangerous
- Moderate Safety Concerns
- Dangerous Areas

ARMS

Use veins in the arms if they are in good shape. Rotate sites regularly.

HANDS

The veins on the back of the hands are sensitive. Injecting here can be painful; push the drug slowly.

FEET

The veins on the top of the feet are sensitive. Injecting here can be painful; push the drug slowly.

HEAD AND NECK

Overdosing is more likely when you shoot up near the heart and brain. Abscesses, nerve damage, and hitting an artery are issues here, too.

WRISTS

Nerves, veins, and arteries are all close together in the wrists. Shooting up here is dangerous.

GROIN AREA

There are major arteries here — if you hit one, blood loss, nerve damage, and infections are a risk. Never inject into or around the genitals.

LEGS

Blood flows slowly to the legs, so inject slowly. Be careful not to hit the artery behind the knee. It is easier to get blood clots here.

SAFER INJECTING TIPS

- » **ALWAYS** use a sterile needle, as well as the most sterile injection supplies available (tourniquets, sterile water, clean cookers, etc.).
- » Clean the injection area with soap and water or an alcohol prep pad.
- » Avoid injecting prescription pills (time release agents can damage veins).
- » Avoid injecting into neck, wrists, groin area, or back of knees.
- » **ALWAYS** rotate injection sites.

BASIC FIRST AID FOR INJECTION-RELATED WOUNDS

Many individuals who inject are at risk for wounds related to injection practices and skin injuries and wounds associated with the drugs they are taking. Considerations for basic first aid include:

- 1 Clean the wound with water (do not use alcohol or peroxide).
- 2 Apply petroleum jelly, A&D Ointment®, or Xeroform®; do not let it dry out.
- 3 Cover the wound with an absorbent layer if there is drainage; gauze or ABD (abdominal) pads work well.
- 4 Cover with an outer layer of rolled gauze or a fabric bandage to hold the dressing in place.

Do not play around with the wound or scab. Some wounds require advanced medical attention, especially Xylazine-related wounds. If a wound is not healing or gets worse, quickly seek medical care.

SEEKING NALOXONE?



Visit <https://dbh.dc.gov/page/where-can-i-get-naloxone-dc>