

# Tennessee Safer Injection Guide

With these helpful tips, you can improve your safety and the health of your community! This guide provides you with information on how to identify and prevent skin abscesses.

## Did you know?

- In TN syringes are still considered drug paraphernalia but can be legally possessed when traveling to and from an authorized syringe services program
- Sharing or re-using equipment can lead to HIV and viral hepatitis infection
- Injection drug use can cause skin and soft tissue infections, endocarditis (heart valve infections), and serious bloodstream infections

## Vein Care

If you don't let your veins heal you might experience:

- Collapsed veins
- Infections at the injection site
- Valve damage

As health conditions such as collapsed veins, skin infections at the injection site, or valve damage can appear in various places on the body, what is considered to be high and low risk may vary from person to person:

- While some research shows arms to be a low risk area, if your arm is impacted by any of the previously mentioned health conditions it may be a high risk area of injection for you

## Safe Injection Tips/Helpful Hints



Always use new sterile equipment (syringes, cookers, filters) to prevent site infections and the spread of HIV and viral hepatitis



Clean injection area with alcohol prep pad prior to injection



Wash hands and injection area with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer prior to injection



Cover injection site with a band aid to prevent bacteria from entering and stop bleeding

# Wound Care

**Abscesses are pockets of pus caused by germs getting under your skin. These appear as a tender or painful lump under the skin that can vary in size. Often these go away without antibiotics:**

- Warm compresses for 10 minutes several times per day can help
- Once the abscess comes to a head and opens, keep the area clean and covered until the draining stops
- **ALWAYS** wash hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer before caring for your abscess
- Use saline or warm water to pull off gauze so you don't damage healing tissues
- **DO NOT** squeeze or lance the abscess to try and get the pus out — please leave that to medical professionals

## When do you need medical treatment?

**Seek medical treatment if:**

- The abscess continues to increase in size or develops red streaks extending away from the area
- You have a fever of 100.4 or higher
- You are experiencing chills or body aches not related to withdrawal

## Resources



**To locate a Syringe Services Program (SSP)**

**near you visit:** <https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/std/std/syringe-services-program.html>



**To obtain naloxone please contact your regional overdose prevention specialist:** <https://www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/rops>