This manual provides non-judgemental, reliable information about drug use and the services available to people who use drugs.
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THE PROGRAM
AHOPE has a permanent site you can visit at 774 Albany Street, but we also offer clean supplies and services from our mobile van, which travels regular routes around the city.

For the most updated schedule of the AHOPE drop-in and mobile van sites/times, please check our website at www.bphc.org/AHOPE or call us at 617-534-3976.
THE PROGRAM

Access Harm reduction Overdose Prevention Education (AHOPE)

AHOPE, the Boston Public Health Commission’s Needle Exchange Program, was created to reduce the spread of infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, and tuberculosis among individuals who inject drugs and their sexual and drug use partners.

The program operates under the philosophy of harm reduction, which focuses on safer drug use. Harm reduction takes a neutral stance on drug use, neither supporting use or shaming people who use drugs. The program provides supplies, education, and referrals to ensure that those who use drugs have the information and resources to use in the safest possible way.

Staff are trained to offer harm reduction advice and risk reduction options. They can also provide referrals to various services including medical, substance use treatment, legal, and housing services. Please ask if you need any assistance. AHOPE has snacks, supplies, warmth, and people who are here to help.

The goal of harm reduction is to reduce risks related to drug use. We meet users “where they are at” and seek to provide non-judgemental support based on their needs.
AHOPE’s services are free and anonymous. We have a drop-in center located at 774 Albany Street and offer several van and outreach sites throughout the city. Any individual over the age of 18 can enroll in the program. You do not need to provide identification or personal details to participate, and you do not need health insurance to get services at AHOPE.

During each visit, staff will ask you for basic information about your current use. Staff are trained to offer harm reduction advice and risk reduction options. Staff will supply you with syringes and narcan, but you are free to help yourself to any of the other additional injection supplies we offer, including water, cookers and cotton.

**We strongly encourage you to bring in your used syringes and exchange them for new ones.** Staff can provide you with a small, hand-held personal bio-hazard box that can hold used syringes. We won’t turn you away if you don’t have a used syringe. The more used syringes you bring in, the more clean syringes we are able to give you.
AHOPE is a drug user health and needle exchange program, offering a wide range of services to people who actively inject drugs, including:

- Free integrated HIV, Hepatitis C, and sexually transmitted infection testing
- Risk reduction counseling
- Safer injection education
- Free, legal, and anonymous needle exchange and risk reduction supplies
- Referrals to HIV, Hepatitis C, and sexually transmitted infection treatment and medical care
- Referrals to all types of substance use treatment
- Overdose prevention education and Narcan training
NEEDLE EXCHANGE

AHOPE provides syringe access to its participants. We give out personal-sized biohazard containers, so it is easier to store your used syringes and bring them back to us. The more used syringes you turn back in to us, the more clean syringes we are able to give you.

We offer a variety of needle sizes. The right size syringe depends on what you’re injecting, where on your body you’re injecting, and how healthy your veins are. Ask an AHOPE staff member if you’re not sure.

In Massachusetts, possession of needles is decriminalized, meaning you cannot be arrested for having needles. You can also buy needles over the counter (without a prescription) at any pharmacy if you have an ID and are over the age of 18.
# SIZE CHART

We created the following chart to help people understand how needles and syringes are talked about in pharmacies. Use this information to understand needle types available at pharmacies if you buy needles over the counter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOES SIZE MATTER?</th>
<th>Barrel</th>
<th>Gauge</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>What the label on the bag should say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Big</td>
<td>1 cc</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5/8 in</td>
<td>1 cc 27G 5/8&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>1/2 cc</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1/2 in</td>
<td>1/2 cc 28G 1/2&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biggie Small</td>
<td>1 cc</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1/2 in</td>
<td>1 cc 28G 1/2&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steroid/Hormonal</td>
<td>3 mL</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1 1/2 in</td>
<td>3 mL 22G 1 1/2&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30s or Ultra Fine</td>
<td>1 cc</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1/2 in</td>
<td>1 cc 30G 1/2&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30s or Ultra Fine</td>
<td>1/2 cc</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1/2 in</td>
<td>1/2 cc 30G 1/2&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultra Ultra Fine</td>
<td>1 cc</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5/16 in</td>
<td>1 cc 31G 5/16&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultra Ultra Fine</td>
<td>1/2 cc</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5/16 in</td>
<td>1/2 cc 31G 5/16&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the exchange we say “big” or “small,” but that is NOT how pharmacists refer to size. The barrel, length, and gauge can be mixed and matched, so beware of just looking at the barrel size when you buy from the pharmacy. Size does matter. Learn what size is right for you.

The barrel of a syringe is measured by volume. It is usually in CCs (cubic centimeters), mL (milliliters) or U (units). 1 cc=100 units=1 mL.

There are two measurements for the needle. GAUGE and LENGTH. The gauge is the thickness of the needle. The higher the number, the thinner the needle. Length is measured in inches.
NEEDLE DISPOSAL

For the needle exchange program to continue to operate, it is vital that participants do their part to protect the program. The most important way to do this is to practice safe syringe disposal. You can return all your syringes to AHOPE in exchange for new ones. It is not necessary to return your syringes in order to get clean ones, but without any returns, we may not be able to give you as many clean syringes.

The program offers sharps containers for safe transport of used syringes - or you can use any hard container with a screw on top, such as a laundry detergent bottle.

There are many options for disposing of your used syringes properly, including:

- At AHOPE
- In the biohazard containers outside of City homeless shelters
- In the kiosks located around Boston (ask staff for locations)
- In biohazard containers mounted inside many public restrooms

PLEASE AVOID throwing your syringes in the street or leaving them in public places. This puts everyone at risk. We don’t want kids (or anyone else) to get accidentally stuck by a needle – please do your part and dispose of your syringes safely!
NEEDLE DISPOSAL CONT’D

Handling injection equipment that was used by someone else is risky. Here are some tips to make needle disposal more safe:

- Re-cap only your own syringe after use, not anyone else’s. Re-capping is important but tricky because of the small size of the cap. Re-capping someone else’s syringe puts you at risk of a needle stick.
- Don’t break off tips– it increases risk of a needle stick. If you have no other option but a trash barrel, put the syringe inside a soda bottle or other capped container before throwing it away. People can get stuck with a loose syringe when they take out the trash.
- Place used syringes in a solid container that can be sealed and disposed of properly.
- Don’t flush a used syringe down the toilet! It doesn’t disappear, and someone else will have to clean it up down the line.

Do not leave sharps in parks or playgrounds. Several children have been stuck with syringes over the years- if you’re injecting outside, make sure you leave nothing behind.
HARM REDUCTION SUPPLIES

Harm reduction supplies available at AHOPE:

- New syringes
- Bleach kits
- Cookers
- Cottons
- Ties/Tourniquets
- Bandages
- Alcohol Swabs
- Ointments (Bacitracin)
- Sterile Water
- Wound/Abscess Care Kits
- Sharps Containers
- Narcan
- Condoms (latex and non latex)
- Lubricants
- Vitamin C
- Rubber tips (for crack stem)
- Chore Boy (filter for crack stem)
- Hygiene kits (comb, toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, wash cloth)
HEALTH RISKS
HEALTH RISKS & COMPLICATIONS

There are many risks to injecting drugs including:

- Overdose
- Endocarditis (heart valve infection)
- Hepatitis C and HIV
- Abscesses
- Cellulitis
- Cotton fever
- Chalk lung
- Vein collapse and scarring
- Track marks and bruises

These risks can be reduced. This guide provides tips on how to inject more safely. AHOPE has testing services on site for Hepatitis C, HIV and STDs and can make referrals for follow up treatment. AHOPE also has skin care and abscess clinics regularly. Ask for the current schedule. AHOPE staff can talk to you about ways to stay healthy and reduce your risk.
HEPATITIS C

Hepatitis C (HCV) is the most common bloodborne virus in the United States. It affects the liver, causing inflammation and scarring, which can progress to cirrhosis and liver cancer over the course of many years. Hepatitis C is a major health risk for people who inject drugs. It is highly infectious and can easily be contracted from even a tiny amount of infected blood.

SYMPTOMS
You can’t tell if someone has Hepatitis C by looking at them. Many do not present symptoms upon contraction of Hepatitis C. Someone could have Hepatitis C for 10-30 years without feeling sick. When symptoms do appear, they may include:

- Weight loss
- Headaches
- Stiff or aching joints
- Dark brown urine
- Fatigue and/or depression
- Low-grade fever
- Nausea and loss of appetite
- Pain in the right side of the abdomen, over the liver area
- Pale feces
- Jaundice (the skin or whites of the eyes develop a yellow tinge)

Injection drug use is the most common way people get Hepatitis C. You are at risk for Hepatitis C if you share any injection equipment – syringes, cookers, cottons, water – with someone who is infected with Hepatitis C. Hepatitis C can stay alive for several weeks outside the body in syringes, cookers, cottons, water, and tourniquets (unlike the HIV virus).

Hepatitis C cannot be killed with bleach or alcohol.

There is no vaccine to protect you from getting Hepatitis C, but Hepatitis C is curable.

The only sure way to find out if you have HCV is to get tested. You can get tested at AHOPE. There are new, effective treatments for HCV that usually involve taking 1 or 2 pills daily for 3 months. If you have HCV and you’d like to get treatment, ask an AHOPE staff member to provide you with a referral.
HIV/AIDS

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). The virus prevents the body from being able to defend itself against other infections and diseases.

HIV/AIDS is spread through infected body fluids, including blood, semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk. Contact with blood has the highest risk of transmission.

SYMPTOMS
You can have HIV and not know that you have it. The only way to know for sure is to get tested. The longer a person is infected with HIV without getting treatment, the more likely they are to develop bacterial, fungal, and/or viral infections, cancers, neurological disorders, and/or other HIV/AIDS related conditions.

TREATMENT
HIV can be effectively treated but not cured. AHOPE provides referrals to treatment.

The best way to avoid Hepatitis C and HIV is to use new, sterile equipment every time you inject.
ABSCESSES

An abscess is an infection that develops at an injection site. It is a hard, tender, warm lump, with a pus-filled core. Abscesses result from:

- Missed hits
- Injecting a solution with a lot of particles in it
- Not cleaning the skin site prior to injecting
- Using dirty needles
- Skin popping

TREATMENT

If you notice an abscess forming, apply a warm compress at least three times a day. The abscess may go away, or come to a head (soften and fill with pus). AHOPE provides Woundcare Kits, which have more information on how to open and drain an abscess.

In some cases, the infection from an abscess may spread to other parts of the body. Signs of a spreading infection are often:

- Fever
- Chills
- Extreme tiredness
- Pain by the abscess, groin, or armpits

If this happens, seek immediate medical attention. The infection will most likely require antibiotics. **AHOPE has regular abscess clinics on site. Ask AHOPE staff for an updated schedule.**
CELLULITIS

Cellulitis is a bacterial skin infection. It appears as a swollen, red area of skin that feels hot and tender. It can spread rapidly to other parts of the body.

Signs and symptoms of cellulitis include:
- Red area of skin that tends to expand
- Tenderness
- Warmth
- Red spots
- Skin dimpling
- Swelling
- Pain
- Fever
- Blisters

Skin on lower legs is most commonly affected, though cellulitis can occur anywhere on your body or face. Cellulitis might affect only your skin’s surface, or it might also affect tissues underlying your skin and can spread to your lymph nodes and bloodstream.

Left untreated, the spreading infection can rapidly turn life-threatening. If you have symptoms of cellulitis, let one of the staff at AHOPE know and they will help you get a referral for treatment.

AHOPE has skin infection clinics throughout the week. Ask AHOPE staff for the current schedule.
ENDOCARDITIS

Bacterial endocarditis is an infection of the valves of the heart. The infection can also travel in the blood to other organs and tissues, including your brain, lungs, or kidneys. **Endocarditis can be deadly.**

**SYMPTOMS**
The main symptom of endocarditis is a **long-lasting fever**, often spanning more than a week. Other symptoms may include:

- Tiredness
- Persistent cough
- Stomach pain
- Painful lumps in hands
- Trouble breathing
- Soaking sweats at night
- Blood in urine
- Skin rashes
- Weight loss

**TREATMENT**
Chances of a cure for endocarditis are very good when it is caught early. Endocarditis treatment often requires 2-6 weeks in the hospital for IV antibiotic therapy. Many hospitals will give people methadone or Suboxone during this time, to make sure that they will be able to tolerate such a long hospital stay. In some cases, it may be necessary to surgically replace heart valves after the infection has been cleared.

**PREVENTION**
Bacteria that causes endocarditis often enters the bloodstream when people use dirty needles or are injecting through skin that has not been thoroughly cleaned. Don't reuse needles, even your own. Needles lying around can pick up harmful bacteria. Don’t lick the tip of the needle. Be sure to carefully wash your skin with soap and hot water, then wipe the area with alcohol pads. If you have an abscess, avoid injecting through or near it.
COTTON FEVER

Cotton Fever is caused by bacteria that may be present in your cotton, especially after it is wet.

SYMPTOMS

Shortly after injecting, the following symptoms will begin and likely last for a few hours:

- Chills
- Sweating
- Fever
- Headache
- Nausea
- Other flu-like symptoms

TREATMENT

Cotton Fever may go away on its own. Lying down with a blanket for a while is recommended. If symptoms last longer than 4 hours or get worse, medical attention is required.

PREVENTION

Use a new dry cotton for fixing every shot. AHOPE provides small cottons that do not need to be rolled around, keeping it cleaner. Try not to do cotton shots. If you must, save the cottons in a freezer (bacteria don’t grow well in the cold) and cook the washed cottons for as long as you can, as it might kill some bacteria.
SEXUAL RELATED RISKS

If you are having sex without a condom, you may be at risk for several sexually-transmitted infections (STIs) such as:

**Chlamydia** is a common and curable bacterial infection. It can be transmitted during anal and vaginal sex. Very often people with chlamydia do not have symptoms.

**Gonorrhea** is a common and curable bacterial infection. It can be transmitted during anal, vaginal, and oral sex. Symptoms often include burning or pain when urinating, frequent urination, and yellow or white colored discharge. Very often people with gonorrhea do not have symptoms.

**Herpes** is a common and usually mild skin condition caused by the herpes simplex virus (HSV). Oral herpes (cold sores, fever blisters) and genital herpes can be uncomfortable. Herpes can be transmitted through skin-to-skin contact, even if the person does not have active symptoms. Herpes can be treated but not cured.

**Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)** is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). HIV is spread through infected body fluids, including blood, semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk and can be transmitted through anal and vaginal sex. You can have HIV and not know that you have it. The only way to know for sure is to get tested. HIV can be treated but not cured.
**SEXUAL RELATED RISKS**

**Human papillomavirus (HPV)** is a very common virus that affects the skin. HPV is spread through skin-to-skin contact, not through an exchange of bodily fluid. In most cases, the virus is harmless and most people have no symptoms. HPV can cause genital warts in some people. The body clears most HPV infections naturally. Some types of HPV cause cervical cancer in women if not detected in time. Pap tests are used to screen for cervical cancer.

**Syphilis** is a curable bacterial infection. It can be transmitted during anal, vaginal, and oral sex when a person comes into contact with chancre, lesions or warts (often unseen). Untreated syphilis can be deadly.

**Trichomoniasis (also called trich)** is a common, curable infection caused by a parasite that is transmitted by genital-to-genital contact. Most people do not have symptoms of trich. Symptoms can include itching, burning, redness or soreness of the genitals, pain or burning with urination, or a discharge with an unusual smell.

**Pregnancy** - If you think you may be pregnant, AHOPE can provide a free pregnancy test. Just ask one of the staff.

Most sexually transmitted infections (STIs also called STDs) do not have symptoms. The only way to know is to get tested. You can get free testing for HIV, HCV, chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis at AHOPE. Many STIs are easily treatable.
SAFER INJECTION
SAFER INJECTION TIPS

- Find a space to use that is well lit where you won’t be interrupted. If you can, take your time.

- Wash your hands and use an alcohol pad to clean the injection site. One swipe of an alcohol pad is a quick and easy way to clean the injection site. If dirt is visible on your skin, use a second clean wipe. This is one of the best things you can do to reduce risk of bacterial infections.

- Use a new needle for every injection. Needles dull easily with repetitive use. Sharpening needles can cause a burr which tears the vein and the surrounding skin tissue. The needle also becomes less flexible and can break off in your vein. If this happens, seek medical attention immediately!

- Use new gear (cooker, cotton, water, tourniquet, etc.) Don’t share your injection materials. Trace amounts of blood can transmit Hepatitis C.

- Use the thinnest (highest gauge) needle possible to make the smallest possible puncture wound.
• **Insert the needle at a 45 degree angle with the bevel up.** Inject in the direction of the blood flow (towards the heart).

• **Slowly “register” or “flag” to make sure you are in the vein.** Injecting slowly also gives you a chance to see how you will react to the drug.

• **Use a soft, flexible, easy-to-release tie,** and remove it immediately after you register your shot, before you inject.

• **Remove needle and apply pressure with something clean to stop the bleeding.** **DO NOT LICK INJECTION SITE** before or after injection.

• **Alternate and rotate injection sites.** Try to inject at least one inch from the previous injection site (working up the arm). Stay away from veins that are red, tender, or don’t bend when pushed until they heal.

• **Use emollient-rich or antibiotic cream** on injection sites once they have closed or scabbed over. The program carries Bacitracin which contains Vitamin E to help the skin heal and reduce track marks.

• **Dispose of equipment properly.** AHOPe will dispose of all of your supplies: used cookers, cotton, ties and syringes.
AVOID NEEDLE OVER-USE

Needles are fragile and are made to be used **ONCE ONLY**. After just one use, needles bend and create barbs, which can damage veins.

Only use needles for injecting. Stirring with a needle can do more damage to the tip than injecting would. If something soft like skin can cause a needle to bend like these photos show, imagine what scraping it up against a metal cooker will do.

You can purchase new needles at local pharmacies, without a prescription. Or you can get free new needles at needle exchange programs such as AHOPE. There are several other needle exchanges located around the state. Ask an AHOPE member to give you a list of needle locations.
USE CLEAN WATER

It is very important that you use the cleanest water possible to dissolve drugs. This water will go straight into your bloodstream. Water can transmit bacteria and viruses such as Hepatitis C. Use the cleanest water you can.

LOW RISK

- Unopened vial of sterile water for injections. You can get this from AHOPE.
- Boiled then cooled water from the stove. Boiling kills most bacteria.
- COLD water fresh from the faucet. Let it run for at least 20 seconds.

MEDIUM RISK

- Bottled water. While good enough for drinking, it can have high levels of bacteria, especially if it was opened or used before.
- Hot water from the faucet is not hot enough to kill bacteria. Cold water from the faucet is better.

HIGH RISK

- Puddle water is risky. Better to catch rain water on plastic and use that.
- Toilet water. If you have to, use it from the tank, not the bowl.
- Used or pierced vial of water can contain bacteria. Throw away used vials.
- Shared cooker of water. This has a high risk for HIV or Hepatitis C.
USE NEW GEAR

COOKERS are metal containers or spoons used to dissolve powdered and solid drugs for injection. AHOPE gives out metal caps to use as cookers. To prevent burning your fingers on these caps, you may use a twist tie as a handle.

If you can, always use a new cooker. Hepatitis C can live in the cookers, so sharing cookers can also mean sharing Hepatitis C.

TOURNIQUETS (Ties, Straps) restrict blood flow, causing your veins to bulge out and making them easier to find. The program gives out latex and non-latex ties. These are kinder to your skin and better for your veins than other options. Neckties, lubricated condoms, latex exam gloves, and socks can also be used, and are also less damaging than leather belts. Do not use leather belts.

Use a slip knot when tying up so that you can easily pull the tie off after injecting. Cross the ends of the tie over each other and slip one end under the other. Pull the tie off immediately after you register, but before you inject, to get the blood flowing normally again.
FILTERS (Cottons)
To make sure you get all particulate matter and foreign objects out of your shot AND get just about every drop of drug solution into your syringe, use a filter.

Try to always use your own, new, clean filters. Sharing filters can result in Hepatitis C infection. Re-using cotton filters can be dangerous and lead to Cotton Fever, because of bacteria that can grow in the cotton.

The program provides tiny cotton balls to use as filters. These are great options, because they do not need to be rolled up. When you roll up a filter, you risk getting germs from your fingers into the shot and the body.

Small cotton balls are the best materials to use as a filter, but filter paper, Q-tips, and tampons can also be used. Cigarette filters are not the safest option, because they are made from fiberglass, which can get into your bloodstream.
Injecting into an artery can cause bleeding that can’t be stopped. If you hit an artery when injecting:

- Apply pressure for more than five minutes
- Lie down
- Raise the affected area (if possible)
- Call 911

### How to tell if you’re in a vein or an artery...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Veins</th>
<th>Arteries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Darker colored blood</td>
<td>Bright red blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slower flow</td>
<td>Fast flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carries blood to heart/lungs</td>
<td>Moves blood from heart to the rest of the body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No pulse</td>
<td>Pulse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAFE for injecting</strong></td>
<td><strong>NOT SAFE</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHERE TO INJECT?

There are a number of sites on the body that people use for intravenous injection. Some injection sites are more dangerous than others: arms are safest, hands and feet are less safe, the groin and neck/head area are very risky places to inject.

When choosing a place to inject, the following checklist is helpful:

ACCESSIBLE: Sites that are easily reached, where veins are springy, not bruised, scarred or inflamed.

VISIBILITY/DETECTION: You can see or feel the vein close to the surface of the skin.

PROXIMITY TO VITAL ORGANS: Vein is not close to vital organs, nerves, bones, tendons or arteries.

INFECTION RISK: Infections in the arms and legs are easier to treat – infections in the head/neck/groin area can be deadly!

If you are having trouble finding a vein in a safe spot, ask an AHOPE staff member for advice!
SMALL VEINS

Injecting in small veins is risky. These sites have a high risk for vein damage and splitting. To avoid injecting in these sites, rotate injection sites in the arm.

**Hands**

Veins in your hands are delicate, so use smaller gauge and shorter needles (like a 5/16 inch, 31g).

Inject slowly to avoid overloading your veins. ‘Digging’ for veins can irreversibly damage veins, arteries and nerves in the hand.

If you are having trouble finding a vein, ask an AHOPE staff member for help.
Feet and Ankles
These veins are even smaller and more delicate than sites in your hands. And, since your feet are farther from your heart, blood circulates more slowly.

Feet don’t get cleaned as often, so injecting in your feet is high risk for infection. If you do inject in your feet, do it slowly to avoid damaging the vein.

People with diabetes or poor circulation may not want to inject in their feet.
HIGH RISK SITES

If you are thinking about injecting in these areas, seek help from an AHOPE staff member.

Groin

Injecting in the groin is dangerous. The femoral vein – the vein in your groin that returns blood from your legs – is deep in the skin and hard to access. The femoral vein is also very close to the femoral artery.

If you are going to inject in your groin: do it right. Find the pulse of the femoral artery and move 1cm toward the midline (closer to the inner thigh) to find the femoral vein.

Legs

Avoid injecting here. Circulation in your legs is slow. Veins here are also more likely to develop clots and obstructions.

If you do inject in your legs, be careful to avoid injecting in valves, or small bumps in the vein. Valves protect your blood flow from the force of gravity. Hitting a valve could cause a vein to collapse.

DO NOT inject in the NECK - VERY HIGH RISK!

Your neck has a lot of arteries that lead directly to your brain. Swelling or infections in this area become serious fast. If your jugular vein collapses, it could interfere with blood circulation to the brain.
INTRA-MUSCULAR INJECTION, “MUSCLING” AND “SKIN-POPPING”

Muscling (intra-muscular) is when you inject into a muscle instead of a vein. Skin-popping (or subcutaneous injection) is when you inject the drug underneath the skin. There are lots of reasons why people skin-pop or inject intramuscularly – most commonly when they can’t find a vein, or because they want the drug to absorb more slowly.

The risks
Injecting in any form carries serious risk of bacterial infections and transmission of bloodborne diseases like HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C. However, muscling or skin-popping may put you at higher risk of abscess or infections because it allows any bacteria to “sit” inside the muscle/fat tissue or under the skin.

If you are skin-popping:
- Wash your hands and clean your injection site with an alcohol pad or soap and water.
- Don’t inject more than ½ cc in one spot – if you’re injecting more than ½ cc, find two or three spots where you can skin pop.
- Don’t skin-pop speed or cocaine.
SAFER ALTERNATIVES TO INJECTING

There are safer alternatives to injecting:

- Heroin can be smoked (“chasing the dragon”) or snorted
- Crack can be smoked
- Amphetamines (including meth) can be taken orally, snorted, or smoked
- Cocaine can be snorted
- Pills can be ingested, snorted or smoked
- Many types of drugs can be taken via booty bumping (taking the drug anally)

If you are using a glass pipe to smoke crack or meth, the pipe can burn your lips. AHOPE gives out rubber tips to put on the end of glass pipes to protect your lips.

You can still overdose when snorting, smoking, ingesting, or booty bumping.
CLEANING NEEDLES

If you are sharing needles, or don’t have access to a new needle, clean your used needle before reuse. Cleaning a needle can greatly reduce the chance of spreading HIV, but does not kill the Hepatitis C virus.

To clean your needle:

1. Rinse the needle 3 times in clean, **COLD WATER**. Discard the water after each rinse.

2. Flush the needle 3 times with household **BLEACH**, shaking the needle for a minute each time.

3. Again, rinse the needle 3 times in clean, **COLD WATER** to get of any bleach still in the needle. You don’t want to inject bleach!

The bleach kits that AHOPE gives out include a bottle of sterile water and a bottle of bleach. Remember, bleach does NOT kill Hepatitis C.
OVERDOSE PREVENTION
OVERDOSE RISK

You are at high risk of an overdose if:

- You’ve just been released from jail or treatment
- You’ve ever overdosed before
- You’re mixing drugs (especially benzos, heroin, and alcohol)
- You’re alone – there’s no one around to help
- The heroin supply becomes more potent, pure, or contains Fentanyl (an extremely strong opiate)
OVERDOSE PREVENTION

Anyone using is at risk for overdose - whether first time or very experienced users. Always have a plan in case something happens. Fatal overdose is preventable with the right tools and knowledge. These tips will help prevent overdose:

- **Use with a friend.** If you are using alone, use somewhere public or have a friend check on you.

- **Be careful buying from new dealers.** Pay attention to the word on the street about dealers and their drugs.

- **Tie off and inject slowly.** This helps you feel the effects of the drug and how much you need.

- **Do a tester shot.** Start out with a little bit to see how you react. Your tolerance may have changed or the drug’s strength may be different than what you’re used to. You can always inject more, but you can’t inject less.

- **Take charge.** Be in control of your own mixing and fixing.

- **Avoid mixing drugs.** Especially avoid combining heroin with alcohol or benzos.

- **Use less to decrease risk.** If you stop using drugs for a period of time (even a few days in detox), your tolerance will change. If you are sick or have lost weight, you may not need as much to get high.

- **Take turns getting high.** Watch each other for signs of overdose.
RECOGNIZING AN OVERDOSE

Depressant drugs (opiates, benzos, alcohol) slow the body down. An overdose will result in dangerously slow or no breathing, causing the heart to stop.

Stimulant drugs (cocaine, crack, speed) speed up the body and can cause a heart attack, seizure, or stroke.

Signs of an opioid overdose can include:

- A blue color of the lips and fingertips.
- Very slow, shallow breathing or not breathing at all
- Inability to talk
- Little or no pulse
- Sudden collapse
- Unresponsive to “sternum rub”
WHAT TO DO DURING AN OVERDOSE

1. Tell the person you are going to touch them and give them a shake. Try to get the person’s attention by yelling at them and trying to walk them around.

2. Perform a sternal rub by rubbing your knuckles up and down their breast bone. If the person is unresponsive, this is an overdose.

3. Call 911

4. Give Narcan if you have it.

5. Give mouth-to-mouth/rescue breathing until help arrives.

6. Position the person in the recovery position (see illustration page 44), if you need to leave them for any reason. This will stop them from choking on their saliva or vomit.

7. Tell the EMT what drug the individual has used in order for them to get the right help.

If you are unable to stay with the person, breathe for the person until you can hear sirens. If you need to leave, put them in the recovery position. You can write a note to tell the EMT what happened and what drug was used. If you are staying, do rescue breathing until help arrives.
RESCUE BREATHING SAVES LIVES

If someone stops breathing, it’s important to give them rescue breaths!

1. Roll the person on their back
2. Open the airway by lifting the chin up
3. Check that there is no gum or food in mouth
4. Check for breathing, if none:
   Give two quick breaths,
   then one every five seconds

   Breathe
   Count to 5
   Breathe
   Count to 5

   After giving a few breaths give them Narcan.

   If you are not comfortable with skin-to-skin contact, use a t-shirt as a barrier between your mouths.

The 911 Good Samaritan law will protect you and the person who is overdosing from arrest or prosecution for possession of a controlled substance. NOTE: This does not include weapons possession, existing warrants, or distribution.
GIVE NARCAN

Narcan, also known as naloxone, is a safe, non-addictive medication. It is an opioid antagonist. It is used to reverse the effects of an opioid overdose by removing opioids from the receptors in the brain. This allows the respiratory system to strengthen so the person is able to breathe on his or her own.

Narcan is a harmless substance that only works on opioids (heroin, oxycodone, methadone, etc.). Narcan will not hurt someone who is not overdosing, and it can only help someone who is.

The safest and most common way of administering Narcan is through a nasal spray. It does not allow the opioids to have an effect for 30-90 minutes. If the person has enough opioids in their system, they can begin to overdose again once it wears off. It is important to monitor the individual, and have enough Narcan on hand to give more if needed.

You may need to use multiple Narcan doses to reverse an overdose caused by Fentanyl, heroin cut with Fentanyl, or a mix of drugs.

Narcan is not a magic bullet. You also need to call 911 and do rescue breathing. Doing all 3 (calling 911, rescue breathing, and Narcan) can reduce the number of people who die from opiate overdoses.

AHOPE offers free Narcan and training to help prevent fatal overdoses.
NEW NARCAN NASAL SPRAY

1. Peel back packaging to remove device
2. Place the tip of the nozzle in the person’s nostril until your fingers touch the bottom of their nose

The overwhelming majority of overdoses are reversed by everyday people without medical training. You don’t need to be an EMT to save a life!
RECOVERY POSITION

If you have to leave the person alone at any point, make sure to place them in a recovery position before you leave so they won’t choke.

Place the person on their side, with one arm above their head. Then put one knee bent forward and the outer arm forward, in front of their body.
WHAT NOT TO DO

Many “old school” methods of how to reverse an overdose can actually be incredibly dangerous. You often don’t know the state of health of the person you are helping. If they have an underlying medical condition you don’t want to cause more problems.

- **Do not leave the person alone.** If you must leave them for any reason, put them in the recovery position.

- **Do not try to make them vomit.** They could choke on their vomit and vomiting won’t wake them up.

- **Do not put them in a bath of water or ice.** They can drown or it can lower their body temperature and cause hypothermia.

- **Do not inject them with anything else** (salt water, milk, opposite drugs). It won’t wake them up and could only make them more sick.

- **Do not try hurting them or causing pain.** If they don’t respond to a sternum rub, they aren’t going to respond to more pain.
RESOURCES
RESOURCES

AHOPE: Access to Harm reduction and Overdose Prevention Education
Office: 617-534-3976         Outreach: 617-592-7828

PAATHS: Providing Access to Addiction Treatment, Hope, and Support
617-534-7113   (617) 599-0246

311 Hotline
General Inquiries: 3-1-1   From a payphone or outside of Boston: 1-855-494-4057

For any questions regarding substance use treatment, detox and program referrals, Access to Recovery (ATR) referrals, Suboxone/ Methadone programs, HIV/Hepatitis C testing, etc. call the numbers listed above.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Mass Health Substance Abuse Helpline
Search for substance use treatment services available in Massachusetts
(800) 327-5050

Needle Exchange Listing
List of Syringe Exchange Programs in Massachusetts
nasen.org/directory/ma

Narcan Site List
Where to get naloxone (Narcan) in Massachusetts
mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/substance-abuse/naloxone-info.pdf

Narcan Video
Demonstration on when/how to administer nasal Narcan
bphc.org/Narcan
*video at the bottom of the page
National Suicide Hotline
24/7 confidential support for people in crisis; prevention and crisis resources available
1-800-273-8255

Domestic Violence/ Sexual Assault Hotlines
24/7 confidential support for individuals seeking counseling services, support groups, and advocacy services
Safelink Hotline: 1-877-785-2020
National DV Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE(7233)
National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-4673

Boston Emergency Services Team (BEST)
Urgent care center for individuals experiencing psychiatric or mental health crises/concerns
1-800-981-4357
MASSACHUSETTS DETOX LIST

AdCare Hospital Detox | 508-799-9000 | Worcester
Andrew House | 617-479-9320 | Boston
Andrew House | 781-232-5506 | Stoughton
Community Healthlink (CHL) | 508-860-1200 | Worcester
Dimock | 617-442-8800 | Boston/Roxbury
High Point | 800-734-3444 | Brockton
High Point | 800-763-5363 | Plymouth
CAB Boston | 800-763-5363 | Boston
Danvers | 800-323-2224 | Danvers
Tewksbury | 978-259-7000 | Tewksbury
Phoenix House | 617-607-6365 | Quincy
Spectrum | 800-366-7732 | Westborough
Spectrum | 781-331-3709 | Weymouth