

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION IF...

- Skin or area underneath it is red, hot, hard, and/or develops bumpy texture (like an orange peel).
- You experience fever and/or swollen glands (usually in armpits or groin depending on where the infection is).
- You see dark streaks running from any infected spot toward your heart (a sign of blood infection).
- You see anything that looks greenish or bubbly (a sign of gangrene).

TAKING ANTIBIOTICS

Specific antibiotics treat specific infections. **See a doctor if you need antibiotics and take them as directed.** It is really important to finish the full course that was prescribed-- **do not stop taking them just because you feel better!**

- Failure to complete a full dose of antibiotics can cause you to develop **antibiotic resistance**. This means medication won't work for you in the future. It can also contribute to the creation of "super bugs" (antibiotic resistant bacterial infections).
- Your meds may have instructions like "take 3x per day" or "take twice daily." Twice daily really means one dose every 12 hours (3x per day means every 8 hours, 4x per day means every 6 hours). The idea is to develop and keep a steady level of medication in your system. Taking all pills at once is not effective and can even cause kidney or liver damage.
- **Antibiotics only treat bacteria.** They do not treat viruses, fungi, or other pathogens.
- Antibiotics work by killing bacteria-- including the good bacteria that live in our guts and help digest food. **Taking probiotics or eating yogurt while on antibiotics can help prevent yeast infections and diarrhea.**

Take only what's prescribed. Only when prescribed. Only as prescribed.

WOUND CARE KIT TOOLS:

These tools are included in our wound care kit to help reduce the risk of injury and infection. **Remember to disinfect everything beforehand and replace tools as often as possible!**

SALINE RINSE:

Use this to clean the area.

GLOVES:

Use these when cleaning and handling your/someone else's wound.

ANTISEPTIC WIPES:

Use these to clean hands or other areas if you don't have access to warm water and soap.

ALCOHOL PADS:

These can also be used to disinfect hands or other areas if needed. Be aware: alcohol stings if used on open or scraped skin.

GAUZE/BANDAGE:

Use these to keep the wound covered as it drains. Change gauze whenever it gets wet or dirty.

ANTIBIOTIC OINTMENT:

Use this on the gauze to keep it from sticking to the wound. Do not put this into the draining wound!



ABSCESS PREVENTION AND CARE

VISIT US!

Washington Heights Drop-in Center: 500 W 180th St

East Harlem Drop-in Center: 104-106 E 126th St

WHAT IS AN ABSCESS?

An **abscess** is a ball of infection under the skin. This infection causes a **hot, swollen, and painful red or pink lump**. An abscess can lead to (or be accompanied by) **cellulitis**: an infection of the skin tissues.

Cellulitis can cause a painful, swollen, hot, red, and hard area that may develop a weird bumpy texture like an orange peel. **Cellulitis infections are serious and only goes away with medical treatment**. If you suspect you have cellulitis, please see a medical provider immediately so they can prescribe appropriate antibiotics.

ABSCESS PREVENTION

Abscesses occur when bacteria gets under the skin. This usually happens due to one or both of the following reasons:

- 1. Equipment, hands, injection site, and/or surface isn't sterile.**
- 2. An injection was delivered into fat tissue under the skin.** This is because absorption is much slower in this area compared to IV and is usually from **skin popping** or **missing your shot**.

HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT ABSCESS PREVENTION?

Email us your drug education questions at info@onpointnyc.org

Follow these tips to help prevent abscesses:

- Use new equipment every time.
- Wash your hands before preparing injection equipment.
- Clean injection site with alcohol pad or soap and water beforehand.
- Use a clean surface when preparing your shot: either disinfect with an alcohol pad or soap and water or use a clean sheet of paper.
- Rotate injection sites to allow veins to heal.
- Avoid skin popping! Even with clean skin and equipment, skin popping can still cause an abscess.

Reduce the risk of a missed shot:

- Use a tie to help raise and secure veins.
- Take your time when injecting. If you're feeling anxious or having difficulty finding a vein, consider sniffing a bit first to calm down.
- Hydrate beforehand to help veins stand out more.
- Avoid smoking right before injecting since it will make it more difficult to find a vein!
- Use heat (i.e. warm bath/shower, hot compress) and/or movement (i.e. push ups, jumping jacks) to make veins more visible.
- If you're having trouble finding a vein, consider taking a short break or sniffing, smoking, or booty bumping instead.

ABSCESS CARE

I have an abscess... now what?

- **Wash your hands and use gloves** before handling your own or someone else's wounds. Wash up afterwards as well.
- Try to get the abscess to "come to a head" by **using hot compresses and/or warm salt water**. Soak 3-4 times a day for about 10 minutes.
- **Resist the urge to squeeze or cut**. This can push infected material further in, which can cause cellulitis: a much more serious infection that requires treatment with antibiotics.
- **Keep the site covered lightly with gauze** to prevent further infection. Band-Aids trap moisture and do not let the wound breathe.
- Once it's draining, **stop using compresses and soaks**. Just clean with soap and water, and cover lightly with gauze.
- Using a light layer of antibiotic ointment on the gauze can keep it from sticking to the wound.
- **Do not apply anything into the draining wound** since this prevents healing.
- **Change gauze** whenever it gets wet or dirty.
- Once drained, you can use saline rinses or water and soap to **clean the area**. Pat dry, then keep covered with gauze until healed.