

PREVENTING VEIN DAMAGE

Injecting cocaine has an increased risk of vein damage: frequent injection, shaky hands, unfocused eyes, and temporarily shrinking veins **makes it easier to miss**. The numbing effects make it **harder to notice if you miss**.

Best advice? Sniff, smoke, or booty bump. Or, use these steps to reduce this risk when injecting:

- **Reduce risk of missed hits:**
Stick to surface veins (like the arm) and TAKE YOUR TIME to find a vein and register. Using a tie and injecting in a well-lit space can help find/secure a vein.
- **Rotate injection sites:**
Overused sites normally hurt. But, cocaine's numbing effects can make it harder to notice if something's wrong. It's tempting to reuse a favorite site, but try to switch injection sites regularly-- especially if the site is swollen, red, painful, or has pus.
- **Give your veins a break:**
Switch up the way you're using. Consider a different route-- smoke, sniff, booty bump-- between injections..
- **Use as little Vitamin C as possible:**
Vitamin C is the safest option for converting crack, but too much burns veins. Add a very small amount first, mix with water, heat, and stir. **Not dissolved?** Add a pinch more of Vitamin C, heat, and stir again. **No Vitamin C?** Try white vinegar.

COCAINE AND DEHYDRATION

Cocaine is **dehydrating** so it's important to drink lots of water! **At least 8-10 glasses a day**.

Dehydration **raises injury and infection risk** since it causes chapped lips, dry mouth, and tearing during vaginal/anal sex:

- To reduce dry mouth, **chew sugar-free gum or suck on a hard candy or ice cube after use**. This will also prevent jaw stiffness.
- To prevent tearing during vaginal/anal sex, **use plenty of water-based lube** (not Vaseline or lotion).
- **Tobacco and alcohol** are also dehydrating.

HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT SAFER INJECTION?

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

SAFER INJECTING TOOLS

These tools are included in our safer injecting kit to help reduce the risk of injury and infection. Remember to use new tools each time!

SYRINGE:

Reusing syringes not only increases infection risk, but blunts the needle. This can make injection more difficult, cause injury, and increase risk of scarring. To help prevent reuse, 2 syringes are included.

COOKER AND COTTON:

To prevent infection, do not share or reuse these! Used cookers and cotton collect bacteria. Our staff will be happy to give you extra.

STERILE WATER:

When dissolving drugs, use sterile water to prevent infection.

ELASTIC TIE (TOURNIQUET)

This is included to help find and secure a vein. If you're having trouble using a tourniquet, ask one of our staff for help.

ANTISEPTIC WIPES:

Use these to clean your hands before touching any equipment to help prevent infection.

ALCOHOL PADS:

Use these to wipe down your injection site beforehand. This will remove bacteria and dirt that can otherwise get pushed into your body!

GAUZE AND BAND-AID:

Your injection site is an open wound!. Apply these to protect it from dirt and bacteria after injecting.

VITAMIN C (PROVIDED SEPARATELY):

Use a small amount to convert crack for injection (just enough to lightly cover the crack).



SAFER CRACK/ SPEEDBALL INJECTION

VISIT US!

Washington Heights Drop-in Center: 500 W 180th St
East Harlem Drop-in Center: 104-106 E 126th St

STEP-BY-STEP: HOW TO INJECT CRACK/SPEEDBALL

1. Clean hands and surface for preparing shot

Wash your hands with warm water and soap or antiseptic wipes. Place a clean sheet of paper on a flat surface to help prevent contaminating equipment.

2. Pre-crush crack

Take another clean sheet of paper and fold it. Place rock inside and use a blunt object (like lighter or phone) to crush it. This will help the dissolving process.

3. Add crack to fresh cooker

TIP: If you're unsure of the strength, pour half of what you normally do. You can always do the rest after!

Crack won't dissolve in water so you need Vitamin C (ascorbic acid) to convert it into cocaine.

4. Add small amount of Vitamin C to dissolve crack

You can always add more, but too much will burn your veins. If unsure, add just enough to lightly cover the crack.

No Vitamin C?: Use a small amount of white vinegar.

5. Add sterile water

Uncap fresh syringe and draw sterile water into the syringe, no more than half of the barrel. Carefully add the drawn water into your cooker.

TIP: If you can't access sterile water, use cold running water or unopened bottled water.

6. Apply a low flame to lightly heat and stir mixture

Use a syringe cap to mix until all powder is dissolved.

TIP: Do not use the plunger since it will collect unmixed particles, which will end up in your shot and veins!

If it hasn't dissolved completely: Add more Vitamin C and heat/stir again. Repeat until completely dissolved.

If speedballing: Add heroin and stir again.

7. Add fresh cotton to cooker (to protect needle tip)

TIP: Cigarette filters contain harmful chemicals. If you don't have fresh cotton, use the head of a fresh Q-tip.

8. Draw mixture from cooker into syringe

Rest needle-- with hole (bevel) pointed up-- gently on cotton. Draw mixture into your syringe by pulling back plunger, then carefully set it on your clean surface.



9. Find a usable vein

It's easier to find a vein if you're warm and hydrated. Drink lots of water and try push-ups or arm swings.

TIP: Healthy veins feel bouncy. Never inject where there's a pulse.

10. Prepare injection site

Use alcohol pads to clean site. Wipe one time in one direction. Don't scrub. Allow site to dry-- don't touch/blow on it since that'll make it dirty!

11. Use tie to secure vein (few inches above site)

Tie it in a way that allows you to easily open it with one hand or your mouth. Remove tie if you experience throbbing, tingling, or start turning blue.

Need to make a tie?:

Stick to elastic materials (pantyhose, latex gloves, or condoms). Socks and neckties are still safer than belts, shoelaces, and other stiff/thin materials.

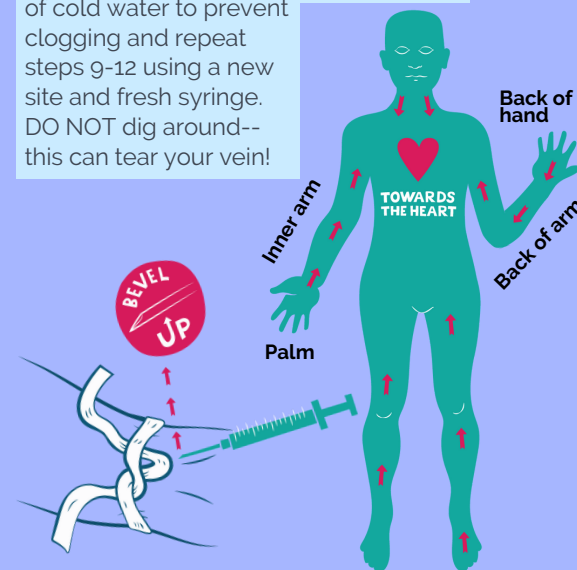


12. Insert syringe and register

Insert needle bevel up in the direction of blood flow. Pull plunger back slightly to confirm you've hit a vein. Dark red blood should flow easily into the syringe. Stop if you feel a sharp pain or the blood is pink/foamy-- this means you've hit an artery!

If you hit an artery or don't see blood:

Open tie and remove syringe. Add a bit of cold water to prevent clogging and repeat steps 9-12 using a new site and fresh syringe. DO NOT dig around-- this can tear your vein!



13. Carefully inject into vein

Unsure you're in a vein? Pause and register again.

TIP: It's best to undo your tie before injecting. If not, at least open it before removing the syringe!

14. Cover the site to prevent infection

Use a fresh band-aid-- with or without gauze-- to cover the injection site.

15. Safely discard all used equipment

Sharps container are available at harm reduction programs and medical facilities.

No sharps container?: Use a puncture resistant container (bleach/detergent bottle). Clearly label, "Contains Sharps." Don't flush syringes down the toilet-- this can damage plumbing and end up on beaches!

For tips on preventing overdose, see our overdose prevention/overamp safety brochures.