Why is this important?

If you're using drugs, especially through injection, taking care of any wounds or abscesses is incredibly important. Drug use can lead to infections, abscesses (painful pockets of pus), and other serious skin issues. These occur when bacteria enter through breaks in the skin, often from needles or poor hygiene. Without proper care, these infections can spread to deeper tissues or even the bloodstream, leading to life-threatening complications. Abscesses can cause severe pain, swelling, and tissue damage if ignored. Cleaning and treating wounds early on, and getting medical help when necessary, is key to preventing more serious infections, avoiding long-term health issues, and promoting faster healing. Protect your health by caring for any cuts, sores, or abscesses immediately. Don't wait until it gets worse. Your health matters, take action to prevent infection and keep yourself as safe and healthy as possible.

Who We Are

Center For Health Justice

900 Avila St, Ste 102 & 301,
Los Angeles, CA 90013

Drop in hours: 9:00am-4:00pm
Monday-Friday

(213) 229-0985
info@chjla.org
www.chjla.org

Center for
HealthJustice

Abscess and Wound Care

Tips for Taking Care of Wounds and Abscesses

Basic Abscess Care

- Directly after missing a shot, ice the injection area. If injecting into a limb, try to raise it above your heart. This won't prevent an abscess from forming but can help with some of the swelling.
- Once an abscess has formed apply warmth to the area for about 20 minutes, 4 times per day.
  - To apply warmth, you can use a heating pad, a washcloth soaked in warm water, warm water (submerge area in warm water,) or saline water.
- Except for when you are applying heat, keep it dry and covered.
- Change the coverings if they get wet or become soiled.
- Always wear gloves and/or wash hands before removing or replacing coverings.
- Avoid injecting near the abscess. If you need to keep injecting on the same limb as the abscess, inject above it (closer to the heart.)
  - This will allow substances can pass into your bloodstream and to your heart without passing through the infected area.
- When the abscess begins to open and drain, wash the wound out with water. Keep the area clean and dry. Continue to use warm compresses as long as it's draining and keep it covered with clean gauze or bandages while it continues to heal.

Reducing Welling When Skin Popping

- Skin popping is when someone injects under the top couple layers of skin but not into fat or muscle.
  - Try to avoid skin-popping meth unless you're very skilled at skin popping because it can cause muscle spasms and wasting away of muscle tissue.
- "Welling" occurs when liquid collects uncomfortably, or "wells," underneath the skin, resulting in a large, fluid-filled lump underneath the skin. Because there is less blood flow in this layer of tissue, it can take a long time for swelling to dissipate.
- To avoid injury, Inject with the bevel of the syringe facing up, you want the sharpest part of needle piercing the skin and layer beneath. Inject at either a 45˚ or 90˚ angle and don't skin pop in same location repeatedly, this can increase chances of welling and infection.

What Do I Do if Liquid Wells Under My Skin?

- Apply a cold compress (covered ice pack or a cold, damp cloth) immediately once you notice welling.
  - THERE WILL BE A NOTICEABLE FLUID BUBBLE AFTER SKIN POPPING REGARDLESS, IF IT HAS NOT REDUCED AT ALL AFTER 5-10 MINUTES AFTER INJECTION, APPLY SOMETHING COLD.
- If swelling remains after the first day, apply a warm compress (a warm washcloth, warm running water, a heating pad, or hot water bottle) in the following days.

Helpful Supplies for Wound Care

- A&D Ointment, Vaseline, or Aquaphor
  - promotes wound healing
- Ace bandages
  - compression
- Baby medicine syringes
  - can be used to flush open wounds
- Baby powder
  - can be used to keep wounds dry and prevent sweat rashes/infections
- Bandaids and gauze
  - keeps wounds covered and dry
- Contact solution
  - can be used to flush open wounds
- 100% cotton t shirts
  - can be used to pack open wounds
- Safety razor blade
  - can be used to safely open and drain an abscess
- Dermplaning razor
  - can be used to safely open and drain an abscess
- High proof alcohol
  - wound and supply cleaner
- Rubbing alcohol
  - wound and supply cleaner