

## Steps to Reduce the Risk of Infection

### Cooking



1. Use a clean cooker and clean water to cook your hit
2. Filter the hit well
3. Use a new cotton every time you draw up a hit

### Cleaning



1. Wash your hands and the injection site
2. Use alcohol pads and wipe back & forth (rub hard) over injection site to remove dirt
3. Then use a new alcohol pad and press down over spot you are going to inject
4. Wipe in small circles from the middle of the injection spot; making larger circles as you go

### Injecting



1. Use a new sterile syringe each time you inject
2. Rotate injection sites
3. Do not shoot into or near an abscess
4. Never lick your point before injecting (mouths can contain germs)

**Tetanus Booster** – Get one every five (5) years

## Wound Clinic

### Abscess Treatment & Care

No appointment needed,  
No charge for services

### Healthcare for the Homeless

#### Medical Clinic

[a program of the Metropolitan  
Development Council]



2342 Tacoma Ave S.  
Tacoma, WA  
253 284-9023

*Contact clinic for current hours*

## Other Clinics Near You

Community Health Care (CHC)

Several clinics in Pierce County:

**253 597-4550**

Multiple languages available

### PLU Wellness Clinic

**Parkland: 253 535-7354**

Corner of 121st and Pacific Avenue  
Weekdays and evening hours

### SeaMar Clinic

1112 South Cushman

**Tacoma: 253 593-2144**

10217 125th Street Court East

**Puyallup: 253 864-4550**

Monday-Friday 8am-5pm

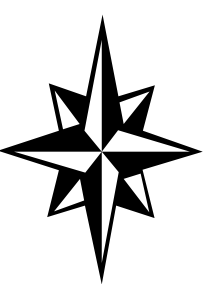
Spanish language available

## ABSCESS CARE

## AND

## PREVENTION

### Information for Injection Drug Users



Pierce County

Syringe Exchange Sites:

Call

Point Defiance AIDS Project

253 272-4857

or

Tacoma-Pierce County Health

Department Outreach Services

253 798-6410



Tacoma | Pierce County

**Health Department**

Healthier. Safer. Smarter.

## What is a skin abscess?

- Pocket of pus
- Often found at injection sites, but can be found elsewhere
- More likely with
  - skin-popping
  - muscling
  - missing a vein
- May occur even after you stop injecting

## How do you know it's an abscess?

- Pink or reddish lump on skin
- Tender or painful
- Warm or hot to touch
- Red streaks and/or rapid swelling indicates infection is spreading

## How can an abscess make you feel?

- Tired or sick
- Feverish, may have chills
- Chest pains may occur if infection goes to heart or lungs

## What should I do if I get an abscess?

- **Treat at home with warm soaks if**
  - No red streaks
  - Skin not hot and puffy
- **Go to a clinic if abscess**
  - Not improving, especially after 5-7 days
  - Gets bigger and/or very painful
  - Is hot and puffy
  - Red streaks start spreading from the abscess-go ASAP!
- **Go to emergency room if**
  - Chest pain
  - High fever, chills
  - Infection looks like it is spreading fast

## Warning

- **Do not** shoot into or near an abscess
- **Do not** squeeze or cut into an abscess yourself - infection could move into blood, then heart/lungs
- **Do not** leave draining abscesses uncovered - the drainage is contagious

## How do you soak/use compresses?

- Use warm/hot water (that doesn't burn your skin)
- Soak in tub of plain hot water or hot water with Epsom salts
- Use hot, wet, clean washcloth and hold on abscess, if abscess cannot be soaked in tub
- Soak abscess 3 to 4 times a day for 10-15 minutes each time, if possible
- Cover with a clean dry bandage after soaking
- **STOP** soaking/using compresses when abscess starts draining

## What about antibiotics?



- Take all antibiotics, if prescribed, even if you feel better
- Take antibiotics after you fix (if using heroin)
- Do not take antibiotics with alcohol, juice, or soda because they may upset your stomach
- Do not share antibiotics because someone else's pills may not cure your infection
- Return to the doctor if your infection is not better after taking antibiotics