What to expect

**Heroin**
- The high
  - A high that lasts 20 minutes – 2 hours
  - Feeling intense pleasure and reduced pain
  - Warm skin, dry mouth, heavy feeling arms and legs
  - Nausea, vomiting and severe itching
  - Slow, shallow breathing
- Coming down
  - Feeling restless, sweaty, stomach cramps and diarrhea
  - Muscle spasms and bone pain
  - High blood pressure
  - Strong cravings for more heroin

**Crack/Coke**
- The high
  - A high that lasts 15–45 minutes
  - Feeling an intense, euphoric rush
  - Warm skin, dry mouth
  - Feeling thirsty, not hungry
  - Rapid heartbeat and breathing
  - Auditory hallucinations, delusions
- Coming down
  - Feeling restless, sweaty and twitchy
  - Sensitivity to noise and light
  - Feelings of paranoia
  - Strong cravings for more crack

Signs of overdose

**Heroin overdose**
- Feels like:
  - You can’t stay awake
  - You don’t have any energy or strength
  - You can’t walk, can’t talk
- Looks like:
  - Slow pulse or no pulse
  - Slow breathing or no breathing
  - Skin looks pale and blue, feels cold
  - Can’t wake up or talk
  - Pupils are pinched or eyes are rolled back
  - Vomiting
  - Body is limp

**Crack/Coke overdose**
- Feels like:
  - Your heart is pumping fast
  - You’re short of breath
  - Your body is hot, sweaty and shaky
  - You have chest pain
  - You can’t talk, can’t walk
- Looks like:
  - Fast pulse or no pulse
  - Fast or no breathing
  - Hot and sweaty skin
  - Confusion, hallucinations, unconscious
  - Can’t talk, can’t walk
  - Vomiting
  - Seizures

What to do if someone ODs

1. Call out for help — do not leave the victim
2. If they’ve OD’d on heroin, try to get them awake and moving
   If they’ve OD’d on crack/coke, try to get them to slow down and relax
3. Call 9-1-1 for an ambulance, send someone to seek help and report back
4. Tell paramedics as much as you can about what happened

Safer Injecting

**What you need to inject safer:**
- Sterile needle
- Sterile water
- Alcohol swabs
- Cotton filter or tampon (unscented)
- Cooker or spoon
- Rubber tie
- Lighter or candle
- Ascorbic acid/ vitamin C (crack only)

Ready to detox? Help is just a phone call away.
Call Access Central at 1-866-658-1221 seven days a week from 9am to 9pm for detox, residential addiction services and addiction housing.

1-866-658-1221

Your peers created this harm reduction pamphlet for you. Be safe.

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How to inject safer

1. Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol swabs.
2. Choose your injection site. Lower arm is safest. If you have to inject elsewhere, lower than hand is OK.
3. Prepare your drugs - crack/cocaine
   - Pour coca into cooker/spoon.
   - Using clean, capped needle, grind crack and ascorbic acid into cooker/spoon.
4. Prepare your drugs - heroin
   - Heat until drug becomes liquid.
   - Take cotton filter/place of tampon and place in drugs.
5. Prepare your injection site with an alcohol swab.
6. Tie off with a rubber tie using a quick release.
7. Insert your needle with the bevel up, at a 30 degree angle towards your head.
8. Flag your needle push needle a little and pull back on plunger until you see blood in the needle.
9. Inject your drug slowly.
10. Pull out and with clean hands, apply pressure to injection site.
11. Safely dispose of all equipment - make sure your facility is properly trained.

Safer injection tips

- Take your drugs before you use.
- Always use with a buddy.
- Use a new needle for each injection.
- Please don't break the tip of your needle or recap it - it's not safe.
- Remember, two holes in your arm are better than one in the ground. If you haven't used in awhile, reduce your dose.
- Protect yourself and your community - always dispose of your equipment safely.

Injecting

- The most dangerous place to inject is your neck.
- To make your veins more visible, jog on the spot or do push-ups before trying.
- If you can't see the bevel, look for the numbers on the side of your needle, they often line up with the bevel.

Filters

- Unscented tampons are safe to use as filters - do not use cigarette filters.
- Use a filter once only - using it more than once can lead to "cotton fever".

Ties

- Ties should be on for two minutes minimum.
- If your hand falls asleep or arm turns red while tied off, the tie is too tight, or has been on too long.

Abscesses and wounds

- Keep injection sites clean and watch for abscesses - they can happen anywhere on the body, not just where you inject.
- If you have an abscess, do not pop it.
- Seek medical care for treatment of abscesses or wounds - they can lead to dangerous infections.
doing it right

1 getting ready

- Never fix alone; always inject with someone you trust and in a place where you feel safe, like in a room with a friend or in a Supervised Injection Site.
- Know your dealer.
- Always use your hit to make sure of its strength.
- Gather together all the equipment you need; get clean rigs, sterile water, alcohol swabs, filters, and ties.
- Get a sharps container.
- Remember one fix = one rig.

2 prepping

- Relax.
- Wash your hand and the injection area.
- Use sterile water to mix your drug in a clean cooker or spoon.
- Draw your drug up with a sterile rig through a filter.

3 fixing

- Feel for the vein to make sure it's full enough to hit.
- Clean your injection area with an alcohol swab.

- Always have the eye of the needle facing up.
- Point the needle in the direction of your heart.
- Put the needle in on a slight angle.
- Avoid the bumps along the vein (they are fragile valves) and where the vein changes direction and branches off.
- Insert the needle gently until you get a flag.
- Release the tie.
- Try to inject only half your fix. Pause and taste your hit. You can't take it back if you have injected too much.
doing it right, continued

4 after fixing
- Clean the area with gauze.
- Don't put other people at risk!
  Dispose of your dirty rig and work in a sharps container or take capped, used rigs to a needle exchange.

Using responsibly will help to:
- Reduce the spread of infectious disease
- Prevent bacterial infections
- Reduce OD and OD deaths

injecting safely includes
- Not being alone.
- Washing your hands.
- Cleaning the injection site with alcohol.
- Always using a new sterile needle each time you inject.
- Using clean water.
- Disposing of needles safely at a needle exchange.

the {safer} fix

quick tips

other brochures in the harm reduction learning series:
- crack (rock) cocaine
- safer injection information for drug users
- vein care
- common infections from injection drug use
- o.d. overdose, crashing
- coping with triggers

We want to help reduce the health risks of injecting drugs. Injecting drugs is always risky. We have written the following guide to help make injection safer.

harm reduction learning series

Visit your local needle exchange or health clinic;
Complete a harm reduction course; or
Talk to a health care worker about the full range of harm reduction services.
Visit a supervised injection site.

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