

WOUND CARE AND INFECTION PREVENTION

Wounds can worsen quickly, leaving you vulnerable to infections from bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites. People with weakened immune systems (those with diabetes, HIV, poor circulation, malnutrition, substance use disorders, and other conditions) are at an increased risk of infections. If you have a wound, inspect it daily for signs of infection.

Signs of skin infection:

- Redness and warmth around the wound or purple/darkened areas on darker skin tones.
- Drainage or pus from the wound.
- A pimple or yellow crust on top of the wound.
- Pain that gets worse or radiates from the wound area.
- Swelling that gets worse.
- Fever and chills.

Seek medical attention if symptoms of an infection develop. While some skin infections can be treated with over-the-counter remedies, infections can spread deeper into the skin and become severe and life-threatening. It is always best for wounds to be evaluated by a doctor.

Caring for a wound

If you have a wound, see the following care tips to promote safety and healing.

Keep your skin clean.

Wash your hands with water and antibacterial soap when they are visibly dirty, and before and after cleaning wounds. Avoid cleaning wounds with rubbing alcohol and peroxide.

Inspect wounds and skin daily.

Wounds may start as a darkened or red spot on the skin that may worsen over time. Inspect your skin daily for signs of wound development. Don't forget to inspect your feet for wounds.

Keep wounds protected.

Cover wounds with a non-adhesive dressing. Change your dressing daily or when it gets wet. If you can, change your socks and underwear frequently.

Use petroleum jelly or ointment.

Petroleum jelly and/or ointment act as barriers and can prevent bacteria from entering wounds. Be sure to thoroughly clean the wound with soap and water before applying barrier ointment because bacteria can get trapped under the ointment and can cause an infection. Avoid antibacterial ointments (like Neosporin®) unless directed by your doctor.

Take antibiotics only if they have been prescribed to you.

Incorrect use of antibiotics can lead to antibiotic resistance. Antibiotics should be taken as prescribed for the full length of time. Unless directed by your doctor, do not take leftover antibiotics.

SUBSTANCE USE: SAFER PRACTICES

UPMC Western Behavioral Health at Safe Harbor and our community partners encourage those who struggle with substance use to seek treatment through the resources listed below. Until treatment is in progress and/or successful, the following tips can help people who use drugs stay as safe as possible.

Clean your skin before injecting.

Prior to injecting substances, be sure to clean your skin with an alcohol swab for at least 10 to 15 seconds. Practice good hand hygiene by washing your hands with soap and water.

Avoid sharing equipment.

Avoid sharing injecting, snorting, and smoking equipment. If you share your equipment, bleach it between uses to help reduce the risk of infection to yourself and others. But be careful to rinse the equipment thoroughly after cleaning with bleach, as explained in the section below.

Properly clean equipment.

- Set aside three cups/cookers.
- Fill the first with cold water (avoid hot water because any blood in the syringe or needle will clot, making it harder to remove), the second with undiluted household bleach (do not use splashless bleach, because it is too thick and will not work properly), and the third with cold water.
- Draw up water from the first cup and rinse the needle and syringe with cold water. Be sure to discard the water you use to rinse the equipment.
- Next, draw up the bleach into the syringe. Be sure to fill the syringe all the way up and keep the bleach in the syringe for a full two minutes while shaking it. Discard the bleach.
- Thoroughly rinse the needle and syringe with clean, cold water from the third cup to remove any remaining bleach.
- Discard the water.

Carry naloxone (Narcan®) and test your supply.

Naloxone can save someone's life if they are overdosing. Always have naloxone handy. Information on where you can obtain free naloxone is included on this flyer. Test your supply so you can practice safe use.

Go slow.

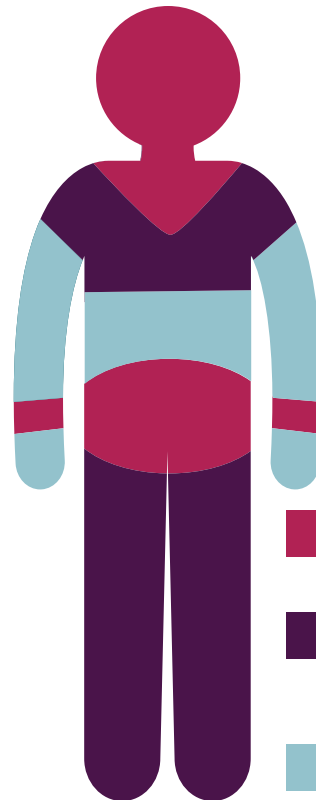
When snorting, injecting, or smoking substances, start low and go slow. Due to a contaminated and unstable drug supply, it is important to use fewer amounts at one time.

Never use alone.

If you are using with another person, be sure one person uses first while the other person waits in case naloxone is needed. Wait at least 20 minutes following injection, snorting, and smoking.

If you are unable to wait, or if you are alone, call the Never Use Alone hotline at 800-484-3731.

Reducing risk of harm from injecting.



If you are using injections, some areas of the body are safer than others. Refer to the diagram to see which areas are the most dangerous for injections, and which areas are safer.

Never inject here.

Safer than the red areas, but not ideal. Inject slowly and with caution.

Safest and best veins to use. Be sure to rotate sites with each injection.

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HELP IS AVAILABLE

For more information on treatment services, naloxone, and drug testing equipment, contact one of the following agencies:

Venango County Substance Use Program
814-432-9100

Crawford County Drug and Alcohol Executive Commission
814-724-4100

Erie County Office of Drug and Alcohol
814-451-6877