

Get Tested. Get Treated. Get Cured.

# HCV & Harm Reduction

Version 1 • October 2018

## INFECTIVE ENDOCARDITIS

Infective endocarditis or just endocarditis can be a life-threatening illness that affects people who inject drugs. Endocarditis occurs when there is a break in the skin when injecting drugs and bacteria or fungi enter the bloodstream. When the bacteria or fungi enter the bloodstream, it travels to the heart and causes an infection in the lining of the heart and heart valves. The infection can also spread to other organs such as the lungs, kidneys and the brain and could cause death. Early diagnosis and treatment will prevent severe heart damage and death. The symptoms of endocarditis include:

- High fever
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- A cough
- Extreme pain

If you have these symptoms, seek immediate medical help. Most cases of endocarditis can be treated successfully with a six-week course of intravenous (IV) antibiotics. The more severe form of endocarditis may require heart valve replacement.

**Prevention:** The best way to prevent endocarditis is to use only clean needles and works (cookers, cotton, water, ties). Use alcohol to disinfect the area around the injection site and clean your hands before injecting.

### Did You Know:

There were three times as many infections of infective endocarditis in people who injected drugs from 1999 to 2016? Protect yourself with safer injection practices. Needle exchange works!

learn more by visiting [www.hcvadvocate.org](http://www.hcvadvocate.org)

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