

Get Tested. Get Treated. Get Cured.

# HCV & Harm Reduction

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## ABSCESS

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When bacteria enter the body during injection drug use it can cause an infection. When this happens the body responds by cutting the infection off from the rest of the body. If this walled off portion becomes an abscess it will be inflamed and filled with pus.

People who inject drugs (PWID) are at an increased risk of abscess's and other bacterial infections. Nonsterile injection practices and equipment are main causes. Abscess's often happen around the injection site. They will have a round or oval shape with a pus filled center and be painful to touch. If abscess's go untreated they can cause infection to spread throughout the body. This can cause things like endocarditis (inflammation of the heart lining) or potentially even death.

If unable or unwilling to seek medical care, there a few things you can do to try and treat it yourself.

- Apply a warm compress for 20-30 minutes 2-4 times a day.

- Make sure to wash the injection site as well as your hands and anything else that touches it.
- Soaking it in Epsom salt may also help.

Some abscesses will resolve on their own. If an abscess is less than a half an inch (about the size of a dime) across you may be able to treat it yourself. If you notice red lines spreading out from the abscess or the pain is growing worse and it's larger than half an inch across, get medical care immediately. Saving your life is the most important thing.

### Did You Know:

- Abscesses are often caused by the bacteria on a person's skin and nonsterile injection practices. So make sure you are washing the injection site before injecting and using sterile equipment.
- If an abscess is less than half an inch across you may be able to treat it yourself.
- If you notice red lines around the abscess you need to get medical care immediately.

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