

Infection Prevention and You



Injection safety: What you don't know can hurt you

Over the past few years there has been a lot of media attention about disease outbreaks caused by unsafe injection practices. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported nearly 50 outbreaks linked to unsafe injection practices, with more than 150,000 patients affected since 2001. These outbreaks have included transmission of hepatitis B and C, as well as bacterial infections.

These events have occurred in many different kinds of healthcare facilities: hospitals, dialysis facilities, outpatient clinics, ambulatory surgery centers, and long-term care facilities. Healthcare providers can spread diseases like hepatitis B, hepatitis C, or HIV if they reuse injection equipment like needles or syringes on more than one patient. Disease also spreads when a clinician uses medication from single-dose vials for multiple patients. In response to this, the CDC and Safe Injection Practices Coalition (SIPC) have partnered to educate healthcare providers and the public on safe injection practices.

Safe Injection Practices

An injection occurs when a clinician uses a needle and syringe to put medication into a person's body. Most injections involve medicines such as vaccines, antibiotics, steroids, and contrast to prevent diseases, help treat an infection, combat pain, or prepare a patient for an imaging test. They may also be used to give fluid or electrolytes when you are unable to eat or drink. It is possible to spread diseases such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C, or HIV if unsafe injection practices are used.

Safe injection practices are a set of steps that healthcare providers should follow when they give injections. For example, healthcare providers should not use the same syringe on more than one patient, even if the needle is changed.

A good rule to remember is ***One Needle, One Syringe, Only One Time.***

Speak up and ask your health care provider to be sure they are using safe practices.

Ask them:

- Did you wash your hands?
- Did you use a clean needle and syringe to draw up this medication?
- Is this a single-dose or single-use medication? Have you used this vial of medication on another person?
- How do you clean the area used to prepare medications?
- Is your blood glucose meter/glucometer cleaned between patients?
- Is my insulin pen or other injection equipment containing multiple doses of medication dedicated solely for me?
- How does your healthcare facility protect me from infections?

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Watch for potentially unsafe practices such as:

- Using the same syringe to administer medication to more than one person
- Using the same medication vial for more than one person
- Accessing the medication vial with a syringe that has already been used to administer medication to you or to another patient
- Using a common bag of saline or other IV fluid for more than one person, by accessing the bag with a syringe that has already been used to flush another person's IV line
- Using insulin pens and other injection equipment containing multiple doses of medication on more than one person

It is okay to talk to your healthcare provider about any safety concerns you have. It just may save a life. **Your life.**

Additional resources

Safe injection Practices Coalition (SIPC) One and Only Campaign <http://www.oneandonlycampaign.org/>

CDC: Safe injection practices prevent infections <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/InjectionSafety/>

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