



**A Radical  
Guide To  
Safer  
Drug Use**

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## **Important notes**

The information included in this zine comes from a variety of harm reduction resources. Their writing has been included unaltered, and therefore includes the recommendation to call 911 in the event of an overdose that you cannot reverse through other means. We personally cannot endorse calling 911, as any calls to emergency services may expose people to police, who are likely to make the situation even more dangerous for the person ODing. There is no perfectly safe way to ask for help in a society that injects police involvement into all of our emergency services. You will have to make a decision that corresponds with your ethics and your own acceptance of risk if you are in a situation where calling emergency services is one of very few options at your disposal. We hope whatever decision you make keeps you safe and healthy.

**Love and Solidarity,  
Brittlebush Distro**

## **Dead People Can't Get Clean**

### **From Harmreduction.org:**

"Harm reduction is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use. Harm Reduction is also a movement for social justice built on a belief in, and respect for, the rights of people who use drugs.

Harm reduction incorporates a spectrum of strategies that includes safer use, managed use, abstinence, meeting people who use drugs "where they're at," and addressing conditions of use along with the use itself. Because harm reduction demands that interventions and policies designed to serve people who use drugs reflect specific individual and community needs, there is no universal definition of or formula for implementing harm reduction."

## Safer Injection Drug Use

### By North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition

**Other suggested supplies may vary depending on the drugs that may be used, but most of these are cheap or easily acquired from a local Harm Reduction group.**

- Plastic straws cut short for single use so no one has to share
- Fentanyl testing strips (these only tell you IF fentanyl is present, not how much is present)
- Fresh sharps and other fresh, un-used injection supplies
- Glass pipes
- And anything else that may encourage people to use safely

Designating a space away from the party or event for using drugs also has the benefit of reducing the chance of guests who are triggered by drug use having to see it or be around it. It also will hopefully shorten the bathroom line as no one will need to hold up the bathroom to take a hit.

Injecting drugs can be a risky business: bad dope, bad cut, abscesses, nerve damage, embolisms, overdoses, & collapsed veins. But you can make injecting safer by following a few simple rules. NCHRC does not encourage drug use, we encourage safer use for active injectors to prevent HIV and hepatitis. Lowering disease transmission saves tax payer money on disease treatment and decreasing the amount of syringes with HIV and hepatitis in the community promotes public safety.

#### **Tips for injectors:**

**1. A clean surface** is important to prevent spread of bacteria. You can put down a fresh newspaper to make a clean surface.

**2. Always use clean water:** Use sterile water. When injecting in a bathroom do not take water from the toilet bowl; water from the toilet tank is cleaner. Water can be sterilized by boiling it in the cap without the dope.

**3. Reduce overdose risk:** It is best not to shoot alone and not to lock doors in case of overdose. Always carry an overdose reversal kit (Narcan) if you can get one. Also, if you're trying out new dope shoot with a friend or if in a establishment tell someone outside the bathroom you feel sick from the flu and to check on you in 10 minutes in case it is stronger than you expect and you O.D.

**4. Injection Kit Disposal:** Be considerate when you dispose of your rig or syringe or leave blood in the bathroom. Keep a biohazard kit on you to dispose of all materials; that way there is no evidence you were ever there. You can get a biohazard container from medical offices or your doctor, NP and/or PA. Coffee cans and plastic soda bottles made great biohazard containers too.

**5. Think:** When choosing a place to inject, evaluate how much seclusion you are willing to risk. If you are more secluded the risk of someone finding you in case of an O.D. is slim, but in a high traffic area you are more likely to be found.

**6. If you are out of syringes and you need them:** You can buy syringes at pharmacies or get them from a local needle exchange. We recommend that you use a new syringe for each shot to avoid abscesses, HIV and hepatitis. If you don't have a new syringe, assume it is contaminated with HIV or Viral hepatitis C. Make sure to bleach your works to avoid disease. This is not 100% safe, but is best if you are in a crunch and going through withdrawal and its all you got.



## How to set up a Safer Use Space

If you host parties or private events where attendees are likely to use drugs, you should seriously consider setting up a safer use space. Designating a space for drug use may seem awkward at first, but being up front about where and how drugs should be used at an event means that people who were probably going to do drugs there anyway will not feel like they need to hide and will be able to more easily make safer decisions when using their drugs.

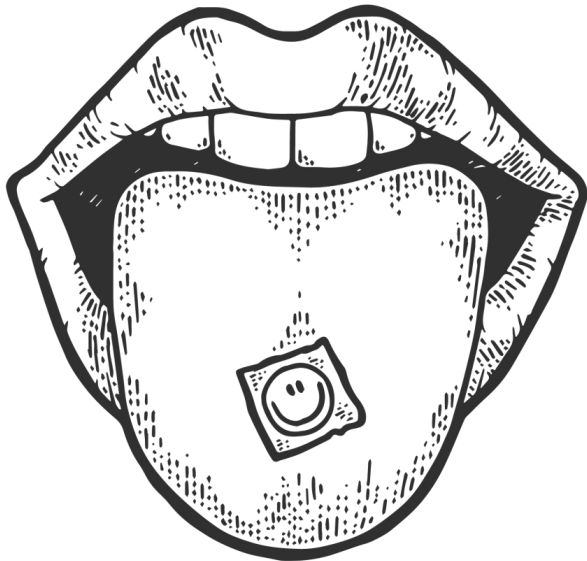
**Depending on the types of drugs your friends and guests prefer, your safer use space may include number of different supplies, but at minimum it should have:**

- Plenty of light so people can see what they are doing
- Chairs or cushions for sitting for multiple people
- A table for organizing the supplies and drugs
- Bottles of water, for hydration and for mixing drugs for testing and using
- Some portable glass surfaces like mirrors or picture frames
- A bin for trash, with a bag in it for easy disposal of drug supplies
- A few kits of narcan and instructions on how to use it.

## Combinations to avoid with LSD

**Mental Health:** Mental health issues, even if never formally diagnosed, increase your chance of a bad experience or psychological harm. The chance of triggering psychotic episodes is very low for most people, especially when the user takes steps to contemplate and minimise the risks, but higher for people who have, or have ever had a psychotic condition such as schizophrenia, or their close relatives.

**Other Drugs:** LSD should not be taken by those who are on psychiatric medications in order to exclude any potential for adverse drug interactions.



## How to do a safer injection:

**1. Use a “new” set for each injection:** each time the point penetrates the skin, it gets duller and duller and causes more damage to the vein. If you need to re-use a set, you need to clean it first (even if you’re the only one to use it). This will cut the risk of injection related diseases (Hep, HIV, etc).

**2. To clean a set (if re-using a syringe):** draw up clean water (all the way) and shake. This will break down any excess blood that is in the set. Do this three times. You’ll want to dump this water that you’ve just used because it’s loaded with bacteria. Then use full strength bleach 3 times and shake for 30 seconds each time, (this will kill the remaining bacteria including HIV). Then draw up clean water again 3 times to get all the bleach out (you don’t want to inject bleach).

**3. Never share water, ties, cookers, spoons, sets or points.** All of these can pass injection related diseases.

**4. Alcohol prep-pad:** before injecting clean the skin. Only wipe going one way (not in a circular motion or “back and forth”-this will contaminate the injection site). This will help you avoid infections

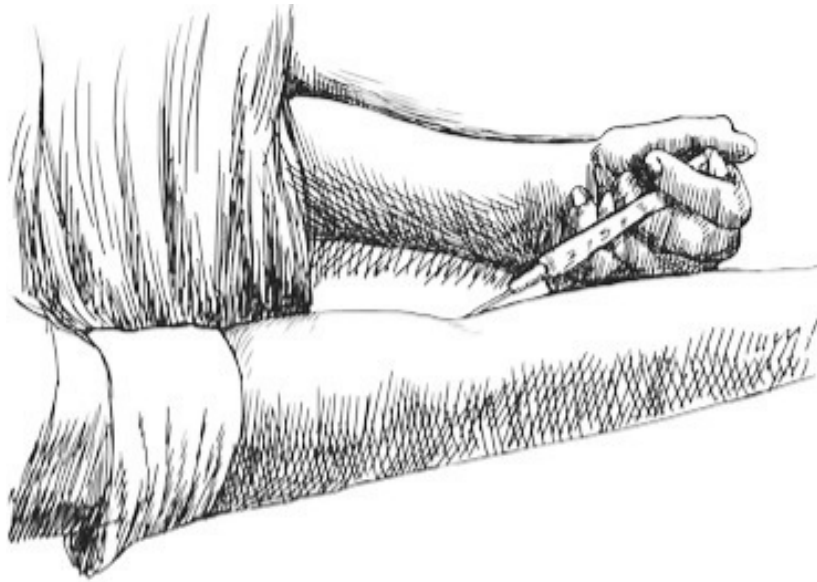
**5. If you miss your shot:** (a) squeeze the shot into a clean cooker; (b) clean the point or use a clean set and draw the shot back up; (c) never reheat blood it can clot the blood and send parasites directly into the blood stream; (d) move the shot up above the previous site and try again.

**6. Where to shoot:** below the collar bone and above the wrists. If you have to you can shoot in the hip area.

**7. Where not to shoot:** (a) the back of the hands and wrists (the walls of the veins are thin and damage easily; they are also loaded with nerve endings); (b) legs (the walls of the veins are thin and the circulation is slower); (c) neck and groin (real chance for damage), (d) eyes, forehead, tongue and genitals.

**8. Avoid arteries:** if you hit one, you'll know it. The blood will be dark and frothy. It will rush into the set and push the plunger. Pull out and raise arm above heart. Apply pressure to stop the blood flow (if it doesn't stop see a doctor).

**9. To avoid hitting an artery:** feel for a pulse, that's the sign of an artery. Look for a blood vessel without a pulse.



## SET AND SETTING

A useful way of remembering the factors that help determine whether a trip is rewarding or nightmarish is the concept of 'set' and 'setting'. A person's 'set' (or mind-set) includes their mood, disposition, thoughts and expectations. A person's 'setting', is the specific place and social situation in which they take the drug. Taking hallucinogens in a calm, familiar place, with someone you trust to be your sober 'trip-sitter' is far less likely to be something regretted for life.

### HAVING A SITTER

Psychedelic drugs trigger a complex range of altered states of consciousness which can make people highly suggestible, especially in the presence of other people. This also means that their ideas strongly influence the way that they perceive the world. For example, once the thought has occurred that they might be dying, they may see their skin appearing to go grey and blotchy. However, this suggestibility is not necessarily all bad; it means that a sober helper, (sometimes called a 'trip sitter') can often successfully reassure them or distract them with a change of scene or showing them something. It is essential to remind someone who is showing signs of beginning to have problems that what they are feeling is not real, and that they have taken a drug which will wear off. Reassuring comments and gestures can be helpful. Have a discussion before you begin as to what to do if things do not go smoothly.

## Safer LSD Use

by Oxford Student Union

### WHAT ARE YOU TAKING AND HOW?

LSD does not kick in straight away but effects usually come on within an hour. The peak of the trip might last for over 4 hours, with decreasing effects continuing for up to 12 hours afterwards.

LSD has a nearly unique property; exceptionally low toxicity. That means that taking far too much might be incredibly distressing (you might even need medical help), but it will probably not harm your body. However, if the 'LSD' is actually another drug like an 'NBOME' chemical, taking much too much could kill you. The trade in LSD is illegal, which makes it especially hard to be entirely sure that the drug is just what it is supposed to be. This risk is particularly high if you intend to take an unusually large dose from a supply you have not used before.

**10. Rotate your veins:** going into the same spot may callous the vein and cause it to collapse. It can also create abscesses. Always move the shots towards the heart. If you shoot below the previous injection site you may break free an existing scab or blood clot in the vein, which may travel to the lungs or the heart causing complications or death.

**11. Rolling veins:** A vein may roll if a tie is too thin. To stop a vein from rolling, you can put your arm against a flat surface and apply pressure.

**12. Angle of injection:** you want to inject at a 45 degree angle with the hole in the needle (the bevel) pointing up. This causes less tearing to the vein and lowers the chances of going through the vein. It also makes it easier for the point to enter the injection site.



**13. Tying off:** will raise the vein and slow the flow of blood. Use something at least 1" wide and have it about 4" above the injection site. Loosen the tie after getting register and before injecting.

**14. Don't slam the shot:** don't push the plunger down quickly because the drug may be more pure than you think or cut with something like rat poison. Slamming increases chances of an O.D. (once it's in, you can't take it out). Instead, slowly push the plunger in or do a test shot (part of a bag) to see what you've got; you can always do more later.



## Additional Drug Safety Tips

by San Francisco AIDS Foundation

### BENZODIAZEPINES

Benzodiazepines (like Valium) are sedatives or depressants. They are dangerous to mix with other depressants like alcohol, heroin or GHB because they can cause overdose.

### ALCOHOL

To reduce the harm caused by alcohol use, know your limits and set an expectation for how much you'll drink before you go out or begin your night. Sip bottled beer and wine rather than mixed drinks, which can come with heavy pours. Remember to drink water throughout the night, which will slow down how quickly you drink and also prevent a hangover. If you're interested in getting support for changing how you drink, check out Cheers Queers or drop-in to the Smart Drinking group for gay, bi and queer men.

### MDMA (Molly/Ecstasy)

Avoid taking MDMA with other drugs that can increase your heart rate or blood pressure, such as meth or cocaine, or sedatives including alcohol and opioids. People who have pre-existing heart conditions including high blood pressure or heart disease should also avoid MDMA. Drink up to two glasses of water every hour if you're dancing in a hot environment. Avoid over-hydrating, which can cause a serious medical emergency.



## **In addition to these, some general harm reduction rules apply:**

- Make sure your drugs are safe. If possible, only use drugs you received from a trusted source. While not 100% accurate, drug checking can help you identify unknown or dangerous ingredients in your drugs. Drug testing kits and strips can be found at [dancesafe.org](https://dancesafe.org).
- Don't use alone. If possible, always use with someone you trust. You can look out for one another.
- Make sure a Naloxone kit is available. Even if you're not planning to use opioids, there is a chance your drugs might have come into contact with them. For example, your drugs might have been cut with Fentanyl without your knowledge. The risk of overdose from Fentanyl is substantial.
- Start with a small amount first. If it's safe, you can always put more in your body. But once it's in there, it's hard (and sometimes impossible) to get it out.
- If you're mixing drugs and sex, make sure you have access to safer sex options that work for you. Consider taking condoms and lube with you. If you're on PrEP or HIV treatment, consider setting timers for when you need to take your medication so you don't miss any doses.

## **You and safer smoking**

### **By Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research**

Smoking any illegal drug is risky because you can never know for sure what's in it or how it was made. But there are also risks involved in how you smoke. Here are some ways to reduce those risks.

#### **Before you start...**

Know your dealer. It's best to choose someone you feel safe with and who knows about the drugs they sell.

Take vitamins or eat something. You may not feel like eating when high.

Find a buddy. Using alone means no one will be there to help you if you overdose.

Find a safe place. Being relaxed and not in a hurry makes smoking easier and therefore safer.

Bring condoms and lube with you. Stimulant drugs can increase your sex drive.

Clean your hands and your own mouthpiece. Use soap and water or alcohol swabs to wash away germs that could go in your mouth.

### **To reduce risk...**

Start with a small amount. If you don't know how strong the drug is, this can help reduce your risk of overdose.

Use your own mouthpiece or pipe. This will help you avoid getting or spreading infection.

Use a shatterproof Pyrex pipe. Other pipes can get too hot or give off toxic fumes.

Avoid using broken or cracked pipes. Damaged pipes can lead to burns, cuts and infections.

Drink water, use lip balm and chew gum. These things will help keep your mouth moist and reduce cracks, blisters and risk of infection.

### **When preparing to smoke meth...**

Make sure the drug is in the right part of the pipe bowl. If necessary, tap pipe gently.

Avoid burning your fingers. Hold the pipe halfway down the stem.

Apply heat to the bowl. Keep the heat source moving around until smoke fills the pipe (so the bowl won't crack).

**However, there are a few steps you can take to keep you and those around you safer and healthier while snorting drugs.**

### **These include:**

- Using your own snorting equipment and not sharing equipment with others.
- Using clean straws (ideally paper ones that won't cut) for snorting lines or your clean hand for snorting bumps.
- Rinsing your nose with water before, and especially after, snorting drugs can decrease the irritation to your nostrils, helping them remain clean and healthy.
- Applying Vitamin E oil to the inside of your nose can help aid the healing process



## Safer Snorting

by **Edmonton Men's Health Collective**

A common way people use drugs is through snorting. When you snort a drug, the drug enters the bloodstream through the blood vessels which line the inside of the nose. This generally results in a quicker high than swallowing. While snorting may seem like a safer way to consume drugs, especially when compared to other ways like injecting, it's not without its own risks. Some of these include:

- Snorting a drug can still result in overdose.
- When snorted regularly, certain types of drugs can damage your septum, which is the cartilage between your nostrils. This damage can cause a hole to form between your two nostrils.
- Using items like bills or keys to do lines or bumps can expose you to unnecessary germs.
- Finally, when snorting drugs, the skin around or inside the nose can become damaged, leading to the presence of blood. This blood, even in small amounts you can't notice, can end up on straws or dollar bills you are using to snort drugs. If these are shared between different people, it can lead to the transmission of infections like Hepatitis C.

## When preparing to smoke crack...

Use screens instead of Brillo (steel wool). Brillo can break apart and be inhaled, and its coating can make you sick.

Pack five screens into your pipe. This is safest. If you prefer, it's okay to wrap the brass screens completely around the Brillo and use them together as a screen.

Use a wooden push stick. Wood is less likely than metal to damage the pipe.

## When smoking...

Inhale slowly. This will help prevent burning your lungs. Exhale immediately. Holding it in doesn't make the effects stronger—it only hurts the lungs more. Handle the pipe with care. It'll be hot after using it.

## Did you know...?

**Eating when you're coming down will help you sleep.**



## Signs of (stimulant) overdose

### Feels like:

- heart is pumping fast
- short of breath
- hot, sweaty and shaky
- chest pain
- nausea
- faintness

### Looks like:

- fast or no pulse
- fast or no breathing
- hot and sweaty skin
- confusion, anxiety
- unconscious
- vomiting
- seizures

### If someone ODs...

It is important to recognize the early symptoms of an overdose and seek medical assistance.

- Try to walk the person around, keep them awake
- Roll the person on their side (if unconscious)
- Call out for help—do not leave the person
- Call (or get someone else to call) 911
- Tell paramedics as much as you can

