

ABSCESS WOUNDS FROM IV DRUG USE

Wound Care Guide

What is it?

An abscess isn't just an inconvenience — it's your body's way of saying "Something's wrong". When bacteria gets under your skin, they create a pocket of pus. This can happen when you:

- Reuse or share needles and supplies
- Miss your injection shot
- Use an unsterile acidifier like lemon juice or vinegar
- Skip cleaning the injection site
- Do skin or muscle popping

The do's and don'ts

- Always use new gear for every hit.
- Wash your hands really well with soap and water or a sanitizer.
- Use filters to keep debris out of your blood stream.
- Never lick the needle tips.
- Never inject hot drugs

How to treat

Treating the abscess early is important to avoid complications.

- Use a clean cloth soaked in warm water to apply to the wound.
- If you've got it, dissolve 1-2 tablespoons of Epsom salts in warm water and apply to the wound for three minutes.
- Never cut or squeeze that abscess; that could spread the infection.
- Draw a circle around the abscess to monitor if the swelling or redness shrinks.
- Once it drains, keep soaking the area with warm water and Epsom salts at least once a day, then cover it up with a bandage to keep things contained.

When to seek medical attention

If you notice any of these signs, it's time to seek medical attention:

- The area feels unusually warm to the touch.
- Persistent redness and swelling that doesn't go away.
- Pus starts coming out.
- Streaks of redness extend away from the abscess, especially towards your heart. This is a big red flag.
- The abscess grows larger than 2cm wide.

Talk to a nurse

Call: 1-800-265-7293 ext. 7006 Mon-Fri, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Email: clientcommunitysupport@wdgpublichealth.ca

wdgpublichealth.ca

