




north richmond
community health
Wulempuri - Kertheba



GOING IN THE GROIN: A GUIDE TO FEMORAL INJECTING

ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

23 Lennox Street
Richmond, VIC, 3121

 (03) 9418 9830

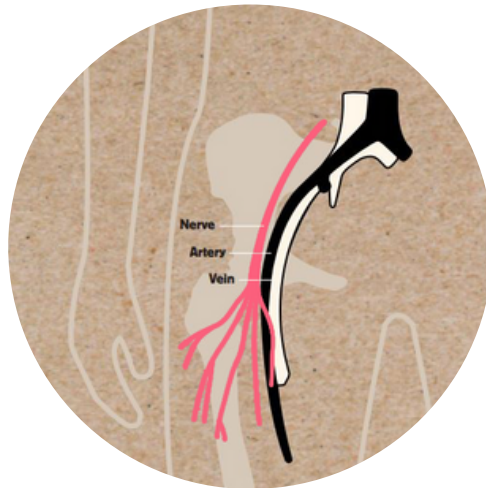
WARNING



The instructions in this booklet are only a guide. Following these instructions will not guarantee that you will get the femoral vein. However, following the instructions may reduce the likelihood that you hit the artery or nerve.

N.A.V.Y.

Nerve, Artery, Vein, Y-fronts



The femoral vein:

- is a large, deep vein carrying blood from your legs back to your heart
- is very close to the femoral artery and the femoral nerve
- may be hard to find and many people accidentally hit an artery or nerve.

FINDING THE FEMORAL VEIN

How to find the femoral vein

Use your middle and index fingers to reduce the risk of hitting the artery or nerve.

Find the pulse in your groin with your middle finger and keep it there.

Put your index finger tightly alongside the middle finger.

Choose an injection site towards the centre of your body, immediately next to your index finger.

FINDING THE FEMORAL VEIN

Following these instructions does not guarantee that you will get the femoral vein, but it will make it less likely that you will hit the artery or nerve.



CIRCULATION AND COLLAPSED VEINS

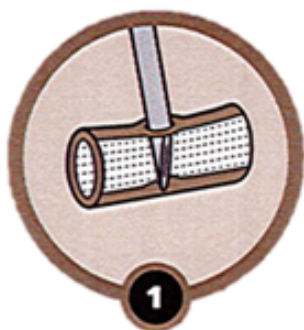
Repeatedly injecting into the femoral vein can cause it to collapse. This can take longer to happen in the groin than in other veins, but it is much more serious.

Blocking the femoral vein means that the blood cannot flow through the leg quickly enough to keep the leg healthy and warm. When the femoral vein collapses, people can have sore, swollen legs and cold, blue toes.

If you keep injecting into a blocked femoral vein, it can lead to tissue death and amputation.



CIRCULATION AND COLLAPSED VEINS



The lining of the vein can get damaged by:

- the needle
- the drug
(especially
Unisom and pills)
- injecting too
often or too fast
- infection
- "flushing"



Damage to the lining of the vein causes clots to form.

CIRCULATION AND COLLAPSED VEINS

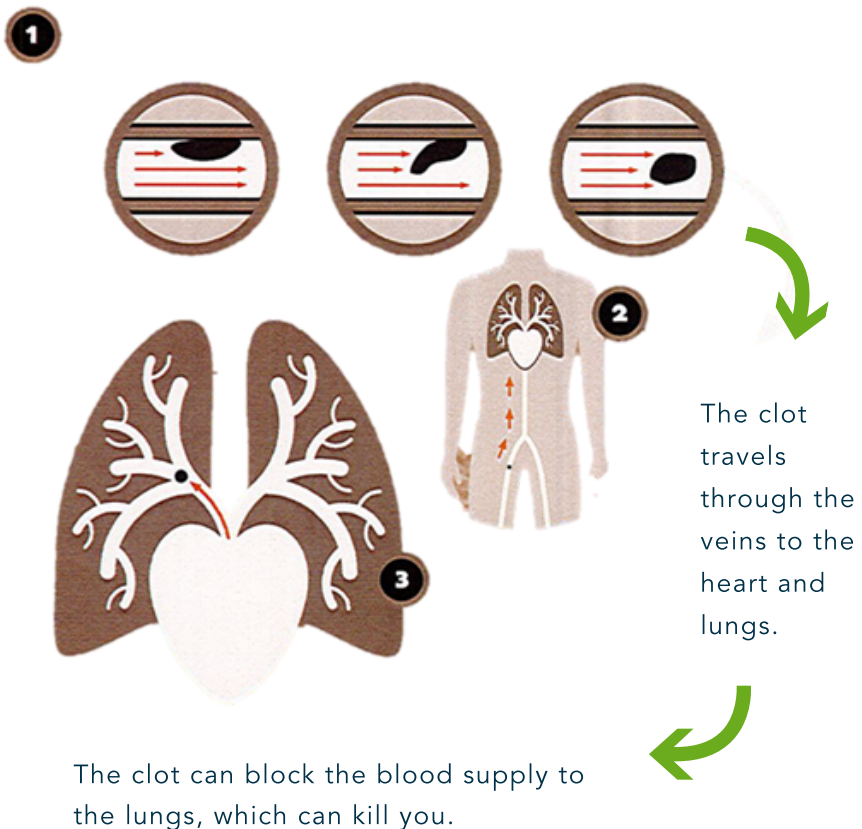


The disruption of blood flow causes more clots to form, making the vein even narrower.



Eventually the vein blocks, and the clots turn into scar tissue which shrinks and pulls the sides of the vein together, collapsing the vein.

A clot in a deep vein can grow quickly, and may not be strongly attached to the lining of the vein. If the flow of blood gets between the clot and the wall of the vein, the clot can break free.



Symptoms of a blood clot that has travelled to the lung include chest pain and breathlessness. Do not ignore these signs.

BLOOD CLOTS

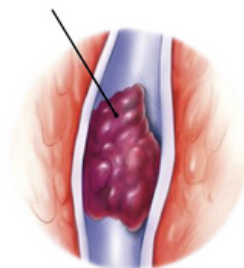
Groin injecting can cause dangerous blood clots to form in leg veins.

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) is a condition where a blood clot completely or partly blocks a deep vein.

Symptoms of DVT are redness, pain and swelling of the lower leg.

If you get any of these symptoms you should see a nurse from the Needle and Syringe program (NSP).

Blood clot



HITTING THE ARTERY

Bleeding from an artery can cause death.

If you hit the femoral artery, you will usually get severe pain, and bright red, frothy blood will enter the barrel of the syringe.



HITTING THE ARTERY

If you do hit an artery you should:

- get medical help
- lie down and apply firm pressure to the injection site for at least half an hour



Call 000 to get an ambulance if:

- if you are bleeding heavily
- your pulse gets faster
- you go pale
- you feel faint

HITTING THE ARTERY

If you hit the artery, **do not inject.**

Injecting into an artery can cause the blood supply to the leg to block and can cause gangrene in the leg or foot.



HITTING THE NERVE



Hitting the femoral nerve hurts. Your whole leg will feel kind of like an electric shock. The instinct is to withdraw the needle. Do this immediately, **do not inject**

If the nerve gets damaged, it can cause weakness, problems with leg movement and loss of feeling in the leg.

CELLULITIS AND ABSCESSSES

Cellulitis

The reduced flow of blood to the leg makes it difficult for the skin to heal. This can make the skin shiny and sore. This is called cellulitis.

Abscesses

Small cuts and bumps to the skin can cause painful open wounds called abscesses.

If you think you may have cellulitis or an abscess, drop in to the NSP to see the AOD nurse for wound care and dressings. **Do not continue to inject into an abscess.**



Where to get help

The Alcohol and Other Drugs program at North Richmond Community Health can provide education and advice on safer injecting techniques.

Learning safer injecting practices will prolong the life of your veins.

Visit the team to learn more.

Contact us

Alcohol and Other Drugs Program
North Richmond Community Health
23 Lennox Street
Richmond, VIC, 3121
Tel: (03) 9418 9830



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