



north richmond  
community health  
Wulempuri - Kertheba



# VEIN CARE: A GUIDE TO LOOKING AFTER YOUR VEINS

## ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

23 Lennox Street  
Richmond, VIC, 3121  
☎ (03) 9418 9830

# WHEN A NEEDLE FEELS BLUNT, THIS IS WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE



**Imagine what this blunt needle could do to your veins.**

# AVOID MISSING HITS

**Injecting a drug into tissues around the vein can:**

- be very painful
- cause serious infections
- will shorten the life of your veins.



# AVOID MISSING HITS

**To avoid leakage and bleeding around the injection site, do not:**

- hurry your hit
- put the needle in at the wrong angle or too deeply
- push in the plunger too quickly.



# INFECTIONS

When you miss a vein, the warm, moist and airless space under the skin is the perfect place for bacteria to grow.



# INFECTIONS

Infections and swelling around the injection site can slow the flow of blood and lead to clotting, scarring and the collapse of veins.



# INFECTIONS

If you miss the vein or notice any infection, swelling or abscesses, come see the nurse at the NSP as soon as possible.



# INFECTIONS

**By improving your injecting technique, you can:**

- reduce vein damage
- prevent some of the health problems caused by collapsed veins.

NSP staff can teach you better ways to inject.





# FINDING A VEIN

Veins carry blood at low pressure and never have a pulse. Anything with a pulse is an artery.

**You can improve blood flow and make your veins bigger by:**

- drinking water
- relaxing
- warming yourself up
- flexing your muscles
- holding your upper arm or using a tourniquet
- warming up the injecting area by putting it in warm water.



# FINDING A VEIN

Try to rotate your injection sites regularly to reduce the amount of damage done to your veins. This will give your veins a chance to recover between injections.

Always use the smallest gauge needle possible. Talk to your NSP Worker about needle options.



# CLOTS AND VEIN DAMAGE

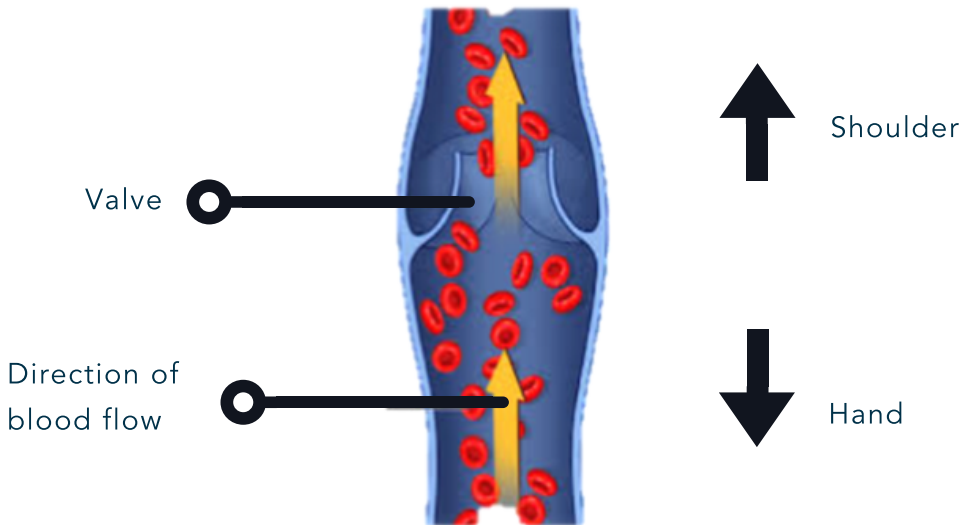
## **Vein damage can be caused by:**

- the needle
- the drug (especially tablets and Unisom)
- injecting too fast
- injecting in the same spot repeatedly
- infection
- “flushing” or “jacking back” the syringe repeatedly after your hit.

Once a vein has collapsed it is gone for good.  
So take care to reduce the amount of damage!



# GO WITH THE FLOW



Always inject with the flow of blood and towards the heart. If you inject against the flow it can cause extra vein damage, pain, swelling and clotting.

# GO WITH THE FLOW

All veins have valves that help blood to flow in the right direction.

**If you inject against the flow of blood you can:**

- damage the valves
- cause poor circulation in the hands and feet
- cause swelling, pain and discomfort in the hands and feet
- wounds on the hands and feet, which may be difficult to heal.



# HOW VEINS COLLAPSE



Damage to the lining of the vein interferes with the flow of blood.



This interference causes clots to form on the inside of the vein.

# HOW VEINS COLLAPSE



These clots make the vein narrower, causing even more clots. More clots means the vein narrows even further.



Eventually the vein blocks and the clots turn into scar tissue.

The scar tissue shrinks and pulls the sides of the vein together, causing it to collapse.

# 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  
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Tel: (03) 9418 9830



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