

# Additional Resources

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## Harm Reduction Manual

Updated: April 29, 2026



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness



BC Centre for Disease Control  
Provincial Health Services Authority

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# Introduction

This section includes links to additional resources to support the health of people who use substances.

# Indigenous Health Resources

This section includes resources to support the health of Indigenous people who use substances. Click on the title or picture and the resource will open in your web browser.

## Substance Use Poster Series: Humility, Respect, Connection and Love



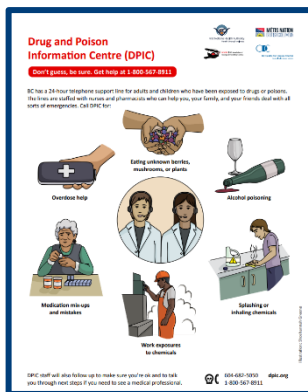
This series of posters shares Indigenous perspectives on harm reduction.

## Pathways to Healing from Stress and Loss



This resource aims to help individuals find culturally safe ways to improve their mental health and well-being.

## Drug and Poison Information



This resource provides information about the Drug and Poison Information Centre in a culturally safe way.

# Best Practice Guidance

This section includes resources on best practices for regulated and nonregulated health and social service providers to deliver episodic Overdose Prevention Services (eOPS) and observed consumption to prevent and respond to drug poisoning in diverse settings across BC. Click on the title or picture and the resource will open in your web browser.

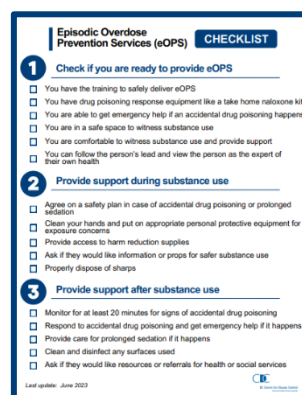
## Episodic Overdose Prevention Services (eOPS)

### Provincial Episodic Overdose Prevention Services (eOPS) Protocol



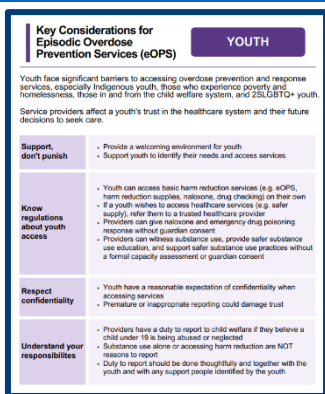
This protocol provides practical guidance for delivering eOPS in diverse settings.

### eOPS Quick Reference Guide



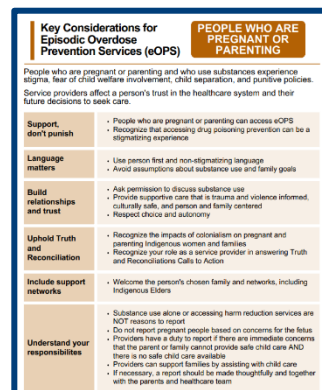
This checklist is a quick reference guide for what organizations need to do to provide eOPS.

### Youth eOPS Quick Reference Guide



This resource shares key considerations for providing eOPS to youth.

### Pregnant & Parenting eOPS Quick Reference Guide



This resource shares key considerations for providing eOPS to people who are pregnant or parenting.

# Housing & Emergency Shelter eOPS

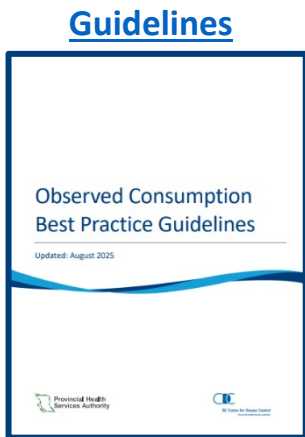
## Quick Reference Guide

| Key Considerations for Episodic Overdose Prevention Services (eOPS)  |  | HOUSING & SHELTERS |
|--|--|--------------------|
| Using substances alone increases risk for dying from drug poisoning. Harm reduction services in supportive housing and emergency shelters can prevent accidental drug poisoning. |  |                    |
| <b>Prioritize drug poisoning prevention</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer eOPS to people who use alone in their rooms</li> <li>Implement drug poisoning monitoring systems</li> </ul>   |                    |
| <b>Focus on support</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check if your policies and practices support people who use substances</li> <li>Provide harm reduction supplies and access to overdose prevention and response services</li> </ul>  |                    |
| <b>Housing first</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abstinence policies create barriers for people to use more safely in their homes</li> <li>Access to quality housing is critical to health and well being, particularly for people who are at risk for drug poisoning</li> </ul> |                    |
| <b>Create more safe spaces</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add an overdose prevention site or space for eOPS in your setting</li> <li>Support safer substance use by changing policies to allow guests</li> </ul>  |                    |
| <b>Focus on relationship building</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approach resident wellness checks using trauma informed practices</li> <li>Support residents seeking harm reduction or drug poisoning prevention and response services</li> </ul>   |                    |
| <b>Collaborate with residents</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop wellness check guidelines together with residents</li> <li>Consider implementing peer-led wellness checks and drug poisoning prevention programs</li> </ul>   |                    |

This resource shares key considerations for providing eOPS in supportive housing or emergency shelters.

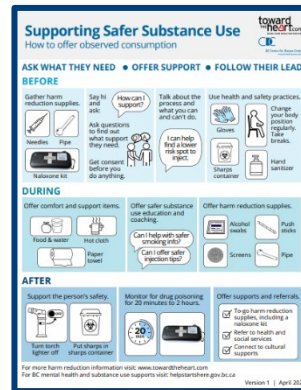
## Observed Consumption

### Observed Consumption Best Practice Guidelines



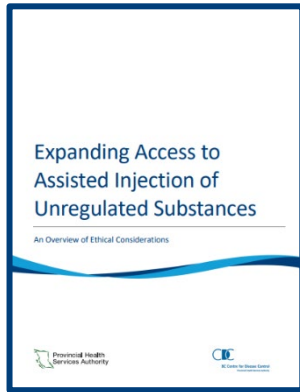
This protocol provides evidence-informed best practice recommendations for observed consumption, including supported consumption and nurse-assisted injection.

### Observed Consumption Infographic



This infographic shares suggestions for service providers before, during, and after offering observed consumption.

## Assisted Injection Ethics Analysis

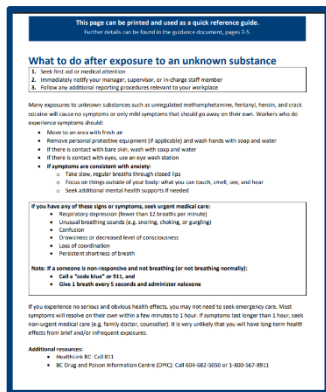


This document provides an overview of ethical considerations for expanding access to assisted injection of unregulated substances.

# Occupational Exposure Guidance

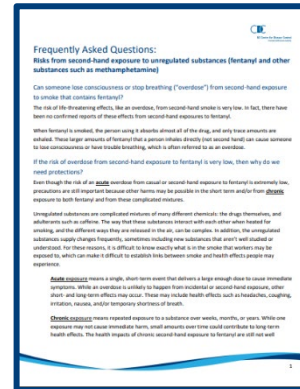
This section includes resources about occupational exposures to unknown substances. Click on the title or picture and the resource will open in your web browser.

## Post-Exposure Guidance



This resource provides guidance for aftercare following unintentional exposures to unknown substances in occupational settings.

## FAQ: Exposure Risks from Second-hand Exposure to Unregulated Substances



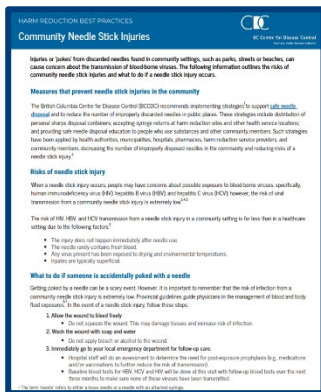
This resource answers questions about second-hand exposure to unregulated substances.

# Needle Disposal and Injuries

This section includes resources about how to safely get rid of needles and prevent getting needle stick injuries. Click on the title or picture and the resource will open in your web browser.

## Community Needle Stick Injuries

### Community Needle Stick Injuries

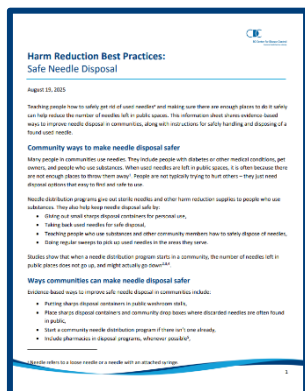


This resource explains the risk of being poked or injured from used needles and what to do if an injury happens.

## Needle Disposal

### Best Practice Recommendations for

#### Safe Needle Disposal



This resource shares best practices for how to safely get rid of needles.

### How to Safely Get Rid of Used Sharps



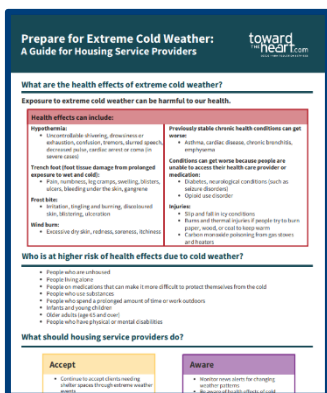
This infographic shows how to use a sharps container, or a different safe container if you do not have access to a sharps container.

# Extreme Weather

This section includes resources about preparing for and what to do during extreme weather. Click on the title or picture and the resource will open in your web browser.

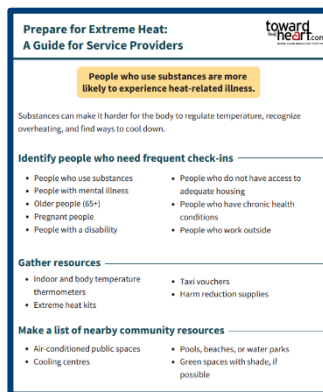
## For Service Providers

### [Prepare for Extreme Cold Weather: A Guide for Housing Service Providers](#)



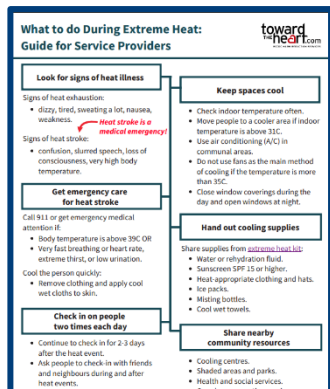
This resource explains the health effects of being exposed to extreme cold weather, which populations are at higher risk, and how housing service providers can help their clients.

### [Prepare for Extreme Heat: A Guide for Service Providers](#)



This resource is specifically for recognizing heat illnesses in people who use substances

### [What to do During Extreme Heat: Guide for Service Providers](#)



This resource explains how to look for signs of heat illnesses in clients and help them keep cool.

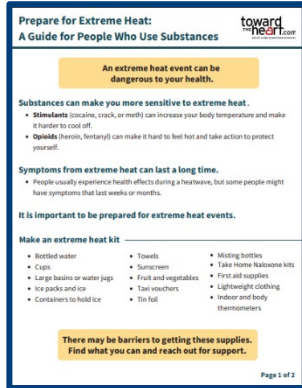
### [Supporting People Living with Schizophrenia During Extreme Heat](#)



This resource is specifically for supporting people living with schizophrenia during extreme heat, who are more likely to experience severe illness and death during extreme heat.

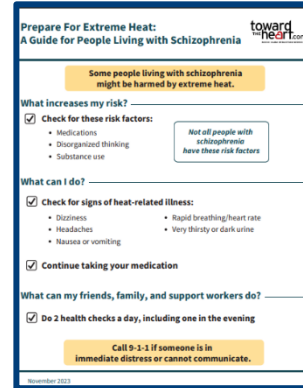
## For People who use Substances

### Prepare for an Extreme Heat Event: A Guide for People Who Use Substances



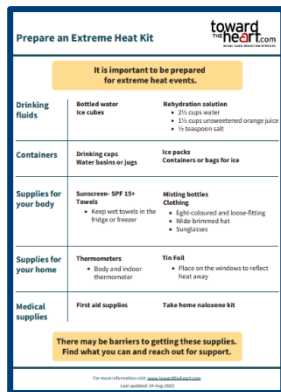
This resource offers tips for how to prepare for extreme heat events before they happen.

### Prepare For Extreme Heat: A Guide for People Living with Schizophrenia



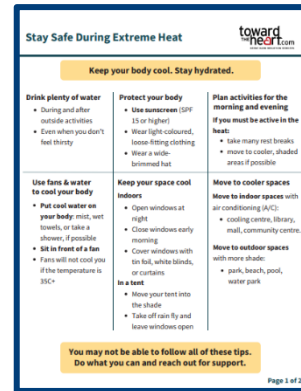
This resource offers tips specifically for people living with schizophrenia on how to prepare for extreme heat events before they happen.

### Prepare an Extreme Heat Kit



This resource helps people who use substances put together their own kit of supplies to stay safe and cool during extreme heat.

### Stay Safe During Extreme Heat



This resource helps people who use substances keep cool and hydrated during extreme heat.

## Using Substances During Extreme Heat

**Using Substances During Extreme Heat** toward the heat team

**Safer substance use during extreme heat may help prevent heat illness.**

| Stimulants<br>cocaine, crack, meth   | Opioids<br>heroin, fentanyl   | Alcohol<br>liquor, beer, coolers  |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase your body temperature</li> <li>Make it harder for your body to cool off</li> </ul> | <p>Make it hard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>feel the effects of heat</li> <li>take action to protect yourself</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dehydrating</li> <li>Large amounts can make it harder for your body to cool off</li> </ul> |

**Try these harm reduction tips during extreme heat**

- Be aware** of how different substances affect your body during extreme heat.
- Find a friend** so you can take care of each other.
- Close window coverings** during the day and open windows at night.
- Do not stay inside if it is very hot** (above 31°C). Move to a cool, shaded area.
- Find a nearby cooling centre**, overdose prevention site, shaded park, pool, or beach to cool off.

**Carry naloxone.**

- Stagger use.** Take some time between doses.
- If you are drinking alcohol:**
  - Choose drinks with lower alcohol content (beer or coolers).
  - Mix hard liquor, like vodka or whiskey, with a hydrating fluid (tonicade, orange juice).
  - Drink non-alcoholic fluids (water or juice) between alcohol beverages.

**You may not be able to follow all of these tips. Do what you can and reach out for support.**

Last updated: November 2023 For more information visit [www.towardtheheat.com](https://www.towardtheheat.com)

This resource offers harm reduction tips for using substances more safely during extreme heat.

## Getting Prescriptions and Carries During Extreme Weather

### Extreme Weather

**Getting Prescriptions and Carries During Extreme Weather** toward the heat team

**What can I do?**

If extreme weather prevents you from going to your usual pharmacy:

- Park your BC Services Card (or Card) or Personal Health Number and ID** with your emergency travel bags and supplies.
- Go to any pharmacy and ask for help.** You may be able to:
  - access an emergency supply of medications
  - get your prescription transferred from your previous pharmacy (short-term or permanent)
  - get carries (the new pharmacist will need to contact your prescriber for this).

**What should I tell the new pharmacy?\***

"I am unable to reach my prescriber or pharmacy because of the weather/emergency situation (or transportation). Could you please look into this for me?"

→

"Could you look on PharmNet at my situation? I understand pharmacists are able to provide me with an emergency refill or extension."

\*Please change the wording of the first script so that it describes your situation

**Do these suggestions apply to OAT and prescribed safer supply?\***

Yes. These suggestions apply to all prescribed medications.

**You may not be able to follow all of these tips. Do what you can and reach out for support.**

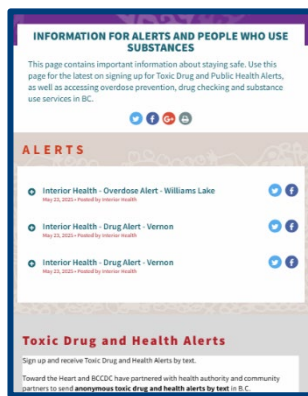
September 2023

This resource offers tips for people who use substances to access their prescriptions, including OAT and prescribed alternatives, during extreme heat.

# Toxic Drug Alerts

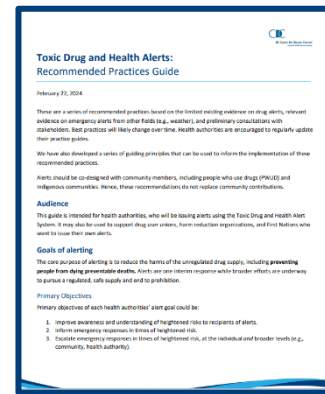
This section includes resources for accessing the latest toxic drug alerts from each health authority and best practices for developing alerts. Click on the title or picture and the resource will open in your web browser.

## [BC Toxic Drug and Health Alert Service Information](#)



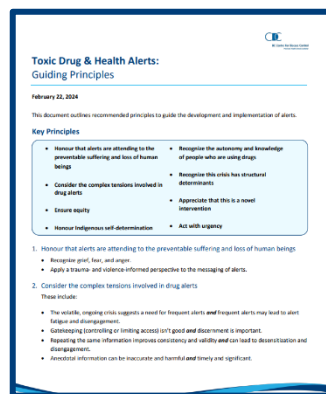
This webpage shows the latest toxic drug alerts from each health authority.

## [Toxic Drugs and Health Alerts: Recommended Practices Guide](#)



This resource shares recommendations for people who develop toxic drug alerts.

## [Toxic Drugs and Health Alerts: Guiding Principles](#)

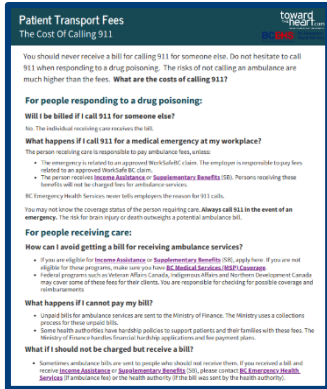


This resource shares guiding principles for people who develop toxic drug alerts.

# Patient Transport Fees

This section includes a resource about patient transport fees when you call 911. Click on the title or picture and the resource will open in your web browser.

## Patient Transport Fees: The Cost of Calling 911



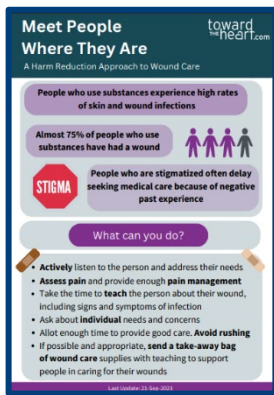
This resource shares information on what 911 services do and do not get billed for, who gets the bills, and what happens if you can not pay your bill.

# Wound Care & Skin Infections

This section includes resources about treating wounds and skin infections, both for service providers and people who use substances. Click on the title or picture and the resource will open in your web browser.

## For Service Providers




### [Meet People Where They Are: A Harm Reduction Approach to Wound Care](#)



This resource offers tips for service providers to help people who use substances take care of their wounds.

## For People who use Substances




### A Harm Reduction Guide to Wound Care

| OK: Watch   | Caution: Get Checked   | Stop: Get Urgent Care  |
|---|--|--|
|    |   |   |
| <p><b>Care for the wound and monitor:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep wound <b>clean and covered</b></li> <li>Wash your hands before care</li> <li>Clean wound every day by rinsing well with tap water or saline</li> <li>Avoid scrubbing or touching the wound- it can slow healing</li> <li>Cover wound with a bandage</li> <li>Change bandage if it is wet or dirty</li> </ul> <p><b>Antibiotic tips</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only take antibiotics that are prescribed for you</li> <li>Do not share prescribed antibiotics</li> <li>Do not save your antibiotics for a different infection</li> </ul> | <p>See a healthcare provider to <b>check for infection</b>.</p> <p>If the skin or wound changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Hot:</b> feels hot</li> <li><b>Painful:</b> hurts more</li> <li><b>Red:</b> edges are red or bleeding</li> <li><b>Odour:</b> smells bad or different</li> <li><b>Fluid:</b> fluid or green/yellow pus</li> <li><b>Bigger:</b> wound size or red skin</li> <li><b>Swollen:</b> more puffy</li> </ul> | <p>Get <b>urgent healthcare</b> if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Fever:</b> -chills or temperature above 38 degrees Celsius</li> <li><b>Hot and red skin:</b> bigger than 2cm around wound (size of a nickel)</li> <li><b>Red streaks:</b> painful reddish lines coming from wound or red stripes up skin, "may be hard to see on darker skin tones"</li> </ul> <p>Untreated severe wounds can cause serious complications like <b>amputation</b> and <b>blood infection (sepsis)</b></p> |

This resource helps people who use substances monitor their wounds and know when it is time to go see a healthcare professional.

### A Harm Reduction Guide to Wound Care

#### (Printer Friendly)

| OK: Watch   | Caution: Get Checked  | Stop: Get Urgent Care  |
|---|---|--|
|   |    |   |
| <p><b>Care for the wound and monitor:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep wound <b>clean and covered</b></li> <li>Wash your hands before care</li> <li>Clean wound every day by rinsing well with tap water or saline</li> <li>Avoid scrubbing or touching the wound- it can slow healing</li> <li>Cover wound with a bandage</li> <li>Change bandage if it is wet or dirty</li> </ul> <p><b>Antibiotic Tips</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only take antibiotics that are prescribed for you</li> <li>Do not share prescribed antibiotics</li> <li>Do not save your antibiotics for a different infection</li> </ul> | <p>See a healthcare provider to <b>check for infection</b>.</p> <p>If the skin or wound changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Hot:</b> feels hot</li> <li><b>Painful:</b> hurts more</li> <li><b>Red:</b> edges are red or bleeding</li> <li><b>Odour:</b> smells bad or different</li> <li><b>Fluid:</b> more liquid or green/ yellow pus</li> <li><b>Bigger:</b> wound or red skin is growing</li> <li><b>Swollen:</b> more puffy</li> </ul> | <p>Get <b>urgent healthcare</b> if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Fever:</b> -chills or temperature above 38 degrees Celsius</li> <li><b>Hot and red skin:</b> bigger than 2cm around wound (size of a nickel)</li> <li><b>Red streaks:</b> painful reddish lines coming from wound or red stripes up skin, "may be hard to see on darker skin tones"</li> </ul> <p>Untreated severe wounds can cause serious complications like <b>amputation</b> and <b>blood infection (sepsis)</b></p> |

This is a printer-friendly version of the previous document.

## Skin Infections and Safer Substance Use

| What is a skin infection?  | What can cause skin infections?  | What can increase risk?  |
|--|--|--|
| <p>A skin infection is when germs like bacteria and viruses enter the skin through the blood. These germs can spread to other parts like the face, arms, legs, and feet, and cause life-threatening infections. <b>Calculate and measure</b> how common are skin infections.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drugs used with irritating substances</li> <li>Scratches, bites &amp; wounds</li> <li>"Missing" the web</li> <li>Bag skin</li> <li>Broken skin (e.g. scabs)</li> <li>"Skin popping" (especially under the skin)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in immune system due to medication or health conditions (e.g., diabetes, chemotherapy, HIV)</li> <li>Increase skin or injection supplies</li> <li>Poor circulation</li> <li>Lack of access to healthy foods</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>What does it look and feel like?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sometimes painful to touch</li> <li>Redness or change in drainage color</li> <li>Swollen, warmth &amp; swelling</li> <li>Pain or tenderness</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Signs the infection could be spreading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Red and swollen</li> <li>Chair of bluish</li> <li>Pain and redness</li> <li>Low blood pressure</li> <li>Redness in spreading</li> <li>Feeling lightheaded</li> <li>Fast heartbeat</li> </ul>   | <p><b>What can increase risk?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Redness or pain</li> <li>Swelling or pain</li> <li>Red streaks</li> <li>Redness or pain</li> <li>Redness or pain</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>DO</b> See a healthcare provider as soon as you can for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proper care, medication &amp; drainage of abscesses if needed</li> <li>Tetanus and hepatitis B immunizations</li> </ul> <p><b>DO NOT</b> If you can get help right away:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply warm damp towels or soak abscesses in warm salt water several times a day</li> <li>Wash the area if there is swelling</li> <li>Clean the wound. Don't rub or scrub water in hole. Tap water is OK to use</li> <li>Keep open wounds covered with clean &amp; dry bandages</li> <li>Get help if there are symptoms of infection. If treated quickly, hospital stays can be avoided</li> <li>Wash your hands and body with soap &amp; water</li> <li>Don't share (e.g., tools, needles, ink, hair, towels, combs &amp; vitamins) in your skin or take a multivitamin. This will help wounds heal</li> </ul> | <p><b>DO NOT</b> Push or cut open an abscess. This can damage your skin and spread the infection</p> <p><b>DO NOT</b> Take antibiotics meant for other people or animals. The wrong medication or dose can make you sick or cause antibiotic resistance</p> <p><b>DO NOT</b> Use creams or ointments unless advised by your healthcare provider. They can make the infection worse</p> <p><b>DO NOT</b> Use hydrogen peroxide, alcohol, bleach or rubbing alcohol. They slow healing</p> | <p><b>DO NOT</b> Push or cut open an abscess. This can damage your skin and spread the infection</p> <p><b>DO NOT</b> Take antibiotics meant for other people or animals. The wrong medication or dose can make you sick or cause antibiotic resistance</p> <p><b>DO NOT</b> Use creams or ointments unless advised by your healthcare provider. They can make the infection worse</p> <p><b>DO NOT</b> Use hydrogen peroxide, alcohol, bleach or rubbing alcohol. They slow healing</p> |

This resource helps people understand what a skin infection is, what it looks like, how to take care of it, and how to inject drugs more safely if you have a skin infection.

## Health Authority Resources

This section provides links to health authority harm reduction resources in different regions.

### **First Nations Health Authority**

[Harm Reduction and the Toxic Drug Crisis](#)

### **Fraser Health**

[Harm Reduction](#)

### **Interior Health**

[Harm Reduction & Toxic Drug Crisis](#)

### **Island Health**

[Harm Reduction for Substance Use](#)

### **Northern Health**

[Harm Reduction](#)

### **Provincial Health Services Authority**

[BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services](#)

### **Vancouver Coastal Health**

[Harm Reduction](#)

# Acknowledgements

## **BC Centre for Disease Control:**

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Harm Reduction Strategies and Services Committee