

Exchange Works - Key Messages and Education

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Introduction

A significant harm for people who use substances particularly by injection, is the risk of blood borne diseases such as HIV and hepatitis B and C.¹

The provision of a reliable and accessible supply of sterile injecting and smoking equipment will assist in reducing the risk of these blood borne infections.

Purpose

Exchange Works staff may be asked to offer information to clients on topics and needs expressed by the client including referral for treatment. Let the client guide the interaction and allow them to indicate if they would like to discuss the information or their personal circumstances with the worker during the exchange. All interactions should be done in a confidential non-judgmental manner.

Procedures

1. Share the following **general harm reduction messages**:

- If injecting drugs, use a new needle and syringe each time you inject
- If injecting drugs, do not share needles/syringes, or any other equipment.
- Injecting with a used needle puts people who inject drugs at risk for hepatitis B, C and HIV and can also damage the skin, soft tissue and veins.
- Consider safer routes of drug administration other than injection if and when possible.
- Exchange used needles and supplies or dispose of them in a safe manner. Bring back used needles in sharps containers provided.
- The practice of bleaching a used needle for the purpose of reusing is not recommended as the prevention of the spread of disease and infection is not guaranteed.
- We offer a variety of needle and syringe sizes to accommodate client needs.
- Practice safer sex and use condoms.
- Consider immunization with hepatitis B and A vaccine, available free of charge to injection drug users.

2. Share the following regarding safer injection information if appropriate:

NB. Education about safer injecting will help increase the safety of those using injection drugs and reduce the risk of infection and disease.

Set up

- Have everything you need within reach
- Have a clean surface to work on such as an open newspaper or magazine or open up a pamphlet
- Never inject alone- be with someone you trust
- If you can, wash your hands first
- If water is not available, use alcohol swabs to clean your cooker, your fingers, and your injection site before injecting

Safe Sites for Injection

- The veins in your arms are the easiest to see and inject in
- Avoid using veins in your hands and feet. These veins are easier to damage and more painful to inject into
- Never use veins in your neck, groin or legs. Using these veins is dangerous, it is easier to get blood clots in these veins

Alcohol Swabs

- Alcohol swabs are used to clean injection sites and fingers/thumbs prior to injecting. Using alcohol swabs can reduce the occurrence of bacterial infections and abscesses.
- Hepatitis C has been detected on used alcohol swabs- so don't reuse or share
- Alcohol swabs should be used to clean the skin prior to injection and not to stop blood flow after injection

Cookers/Spoons

- Cookers are used to mix drugs into a solution
- HIV and hepatitis C have been detected on cookers/spoons so use a new one every time and don't share
- Two types of cookers/spoons are available through the Exchange Works program

Sterile Water

- Use sterile water for mixing up your drug solution
- If you can't get sterile water, your next best choices in order are:
 - distilled water from a drug store or grocery store
 - bottled water from the corner store
 - boiled water which has been cooled but not left sitting in the kettle
 - cold tap water
- Non-sterile water/fluids (e.g. Tap water, puddles, saliva, urine, bottled water) can lead to bacterial infections
- Hepatitis C and HIV have been detected in used water. Hepatitis C can survive in water for 3 weeks. Sharing, mixing or using rinsing water is associated with HIV and hepatitis B and C transmission.

Filters

- Filter your shot with a new filter every time.
- Filters are used on the tip of the needle to prevent debris (dirt, large particles) from being drawn up into the syringe.
- Avoid cigarette filters as some have glass fibers. Injecting these fibers can damage your veins and heart
- If you do not have filters from the Exchange Works program, you can use the corner of an alcohol swab, gauze of a new band aid, or a piece of a tampon
- Cut the piece off that you wish to use, don't tear it off. Tearing causes loose fibers that you could draw up in your needle
- Sharing filters has been associated with HIV, hepatitis B and C transmission

Ascorbic Acid/Vitamin C

- To create an injectable solution, an acid is necessary to dissolve drugs such as crack cocaine and some heroin
- Using household items/common acidifiers (e.g. Lemon juice, vinegar) may cause other health-related harms like bacterial infections.
- Any acid injected into the bloodstream may lead to vessel irritation and possible local vein damage. Ascorbic acid (vitamin C) is less irritating to veins than citric acid.
- Clients should only use acidifiers when they are needed and should use the smallest amount possible.
- Ask clients if they need ascorbic acid to dissolve the drug they are using

Tourniquets/Ties

- Elastic ties and nylons are better than a leather belt to tie off with. Use something with enough elastic to provide a quick, easy release
- Do not leave a tie on for longer than one minute
- If you can't find a vein in that time, try a different site or wait a few minutes and try again
- Running warm water over the site or hanging your arm below your waist may help you find a vein
- A tourniquet is considered unclean and needs to be replaced when:
 - There is visible blood and/or dirt
 - It has ever been used by someone else
 - There is a loss of elasticity

Flagging

- "Flag" or pull back on the plunger before you inject to be sure that your needle is in a vein
- Blood will come back into the barrel when you flag; it will be dark red
- If the blood is bright red and frothy, PULL OUT and apply pressure to the site; you are in an artery
- Release the tie once you know you are in a vein, before you inject

Needle Disposal

- Never leave a needle where someone else could use it or get poked
- Use a needle disposal container from Exchange Works
- A pop or water bottle with a lid can also be used to store used needles

- Bring your container of used needles to Exchange Works for disposal
 - 24 hour disposable containers are available in Huntsville, Barrie, Orillia

3. Share the following about safe smoking information if appropriate

DO NOT SHARE YOUR GLASS STEM OR MOUTHPIECE

Equipment is considered unsafe and needs to be replaced when:

- The pipe and/or the mouthpiece have been used by anyone else
- The pipe is scratched, chipped or cracked
- The mouthpiece is burnt
- The screen shrinks and is loose in the stem

Smoking crack cocaine or methamphetamine with self-made pipes (e.g. Glass bottles, beverage cans, plastic bottles) can lead to injury and burns to mouth, lips and hands, inhalation of toxic vapours.

Studies identify sharing pipes and mouth pieces as a risk for HIV, hepatitis B and C transmission

Mouthpiece

- This piece of plastic is placed at the end of the glass stem where you put your lips

Glass stem

- A long thin Pyrex glass tube.
- Put the plastic mouth piece on one end of the tube.
- The rock of crack is placed at the other end on top of the screens.
- When heated the smoke from the rock is inhaled through the glass stem.

Brass Screens

- 5 brass screens in a pack. Roll the 5 screens together.
- Place them at the other end of the glass stem.
- Make sure that they are packed tightly with the push stick so the screens stay in place and don't get caught in your throat.
- Heating the brass screens will make them easier to work with.

Push Stick

- Use the push stick to push the screens to one end of the glass stem.

Alcohol Swabs

- Use these to clean your glass stem and mouthpiece. Clean them every time that you use your stem.

Disposal of the glass stem.

- Put your used glass stem with the mouthpiece in a biohazard container, can or jar and bring it back to a Needle Exchange location.

Bowl kits

Mouthpiece

- This piece of plastic is placed at the end of the glass stem where you put your lips

Glass pipe

- a long Pyrex tube with a round bulb at the end for the liquid substance

Alcohol Swabs

- Use these to clean your glass stem and mouthpiece. Clean them every time that you use your stem

Disposal of the glass stem.

- Put your used glass stem with the mouthpiece in a biohazard container, can or jar and bring it back to a Needle Exchange location.

4. Share Other Important Messages as needed:

Smoking, snorting or swallowing a drug is safer than injecting.

Medical Attention

- Develop fever, vomiting, chills and a tired feeling. You may be developing an infection, seek medical care right away.
- Injection site is red, swollen and hot to touch. You may have an abscess. Infections like these are serious and must be treated right away.

TESTING

- If client has ever had unprotected sex or shared any drug related equipment they may want to consider having testing for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and blood borne infection (BBIs) with a health care provider or at the local Sexual Health Clinic.

TREATMENT

- Provide a copy of the treatment card if information is requested. Cards can be ordered on the Exchange Works supply order form.

NALOXONE PROGRAM

- A harm reduction initiative that distributes Naloxone kits to people who use opioids and their friends/family. The purpose of the naloxone program is to put Naloxone into the hands of people who use opioids in Simcoe Muskoka so that they can use it in the event of an overdose.
- Naloxone reverses the effects of an opioid overdose.
- Naloxone acts quickly, within 1 to 5 minutes.
- People who are distributed the kit will be encouraged to call 911, administer nasal naloxone, start chest compressions and/or rescue breathing when signs of an overdose are evident
- Naloxone is a very safe drug. It only works to block the effects of opioids in the brain and cannot get a person high.

- Needle exchange clients who use opioids and family/friends can get a naloxone kit by calling the health unit 705-721-7520 or dropping into a health unit office/clinic. Kits are also available at participating pharmacies and other community outreach programs

Related Policies

EW – Staff Training and Anonymity
EW - Documentation
EW – Media Inquiries
EW – Needle Stick Injuries
EW – Provision and Return of Supplies
EW – Staff Safety

Final Approval Signature: _____

Review/Revision History:

2016.07.06

References:

Canadian Nurses Association (2018) Joint position statement, Harm Reduction and Substance use; retrieved from www.cna-aiic.ca/-/cna/page-content/pdf-en/joint_position_statement_harm_reduction_and_substance_use.pdf