



MAKE SMART INJECTION CHOICES

GUIDING SAFE AND APPROPRIATE INJECTION PRACTICES



For Professional Associations



**World Health
Organization**

SAFE INJECTION CHOICES MATTER



Action by medical and other professional associations is crucial to sensitize health care workers about avoidable infections caused by unsafe injection practices and convince them to make smart injection choices.

WORKING TOGETHER

Professional health associations are respected and looked upon to provide leadership on all health issues. They can play a critical role in increasing awareness about the risk of infections associated with unsafe injection practices, and changing the belief that injections are more effective than oral treatments. Professionally-endorsed injection safety guidelines, recommendations and strategies will encourage smart injection choices and practices, eliminate re-use of syringes and needles, and reduce injection over-use, ultimately benefiting health care workers, patients and the wider community.

Many injections around the world are unnecessary and often unsafe. Unsafe injections **put lives at risk** and cause 1.67 million hepatitis B infections every year, up to 315 120 hepatitis C infections and up to 33 877 human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).^{1,2}

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends rational use of injections, safe injection practice and exclusive use of safety-engineered syringes for all injections by 2020.

By playing a key role, professional health associations at a national, regional and local level can help to reduce unnecessary injections and harm from unsafe injections.



1. Pepin et al. Evolution of the global use of unsafe medical injections, 2000-2010. PLoS One. 2013 Dec 8;12:e80948.

2. Pepin et al. Evolution of the global burden of viral infections from unsafe medical injections, 2000-2010. PLoS One. 2014 Jun 9;9(6):e99677.

PREVENTION IS THE BEST MEDICINE



UNSAFE INJECTION PRACTICES

Unsafe injection practices are caused by avoidable risky situations and practices including:

- ❌ Lack of awareness of the risks of unsafe injections.
- ❌ Over-use of injections for illnesses for which oral medications are the recommended first-line treatment.
- ❌ Needle-stick injuries to health care workers from recapping needles.
- ❌ Lack of clean work spaces.
- ❌ Re-use of syringes, needles and other injection equipment.
- ❌ Unsafe sharps collection and health care waste management.

SAFETY FIRST

One of the most effective ways to avoid injection-associated infections is to reduce the number of injections given in health care settings. As many as 70% of injections are unnecessary or could be replaced by oral medications that are safer and equally effective.

If an injection is necessary or medically-indicated, WHO recommends the exclusive use of safety-engineered syringes that have mechanisms preventing re-use [re-use prevention (RUP) syringe] and/or protecting the health care worker from needle-stick injuries [sharp injury protection (SIP) feature].



STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS SUPPORT

How can professional associations help to promote safe injections?

- ✓ By promoting WHO's injection safety guidelines:
 - Advocating for rational prescription of injections.
 - Always promoting safe injection practices.
 - Encouraging the use of WHO prequalified safety-engineered syringes for all injections.
- ✓ By organizing training dedicated to injection safety and advocating with regulatory bodies e.g. Ministry of Health, Health Department, to ensure sufficient training and support of health workers.
- ✓ By supporting and promoting standards for the safe disposal of syringes and needles.
- ✓ By recommending the immunization of health workers against hepatitis B.

Formulating strategies to eliminate unsafe injections will result in:

- ✓ Improvements in the quality and safety of health care through the adoption of best practice.
- ✓ Savings on expenditure for diagnosis and treatment of blood-borne infections.
- ✓ Savings through reductions in unnecessary injections.

By implementing strategies to encourage smart injection choices among health care workers, patients and the wider community, we can all work together to avoid the risks of unsafe injections.



For further information please visit: www.who.int/infection-prevention

