



MAKE SMART INJECTION CHOICES

YOUR GUIDE TO SAFE
MEDICAL TREATMENT



For Patients and Communities



World Health
Organization

MAKING SAFE INJECTION CHOICES

When did you last have an injection?
Within the last week, month, or year?
The chances are that it won't have been so long ago
because injections are in common use.



In many cases, injections can be replaced by medicines you take by mouth, which are much safer for you, and just as effective. It is important to make smart injection choices for yourself, and your children.

INJECTIONS SHOULD BE SAFE

Injections can be an effective treatment for many illnesses and diseases. Unsafe injections administered by health care providers may put you at risk of contracting a dangerous infection, such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).



HOW CAN AN INJECTION BE UNSAFE?

If a syringe or the needle has been re-used and contaminated with infected blood, it can spread infections from one person to another. If you are injected with a syringe that has been used on another person there is a real risk you may become infected.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNSAFE INJECTIONS

- **HEPATITIS B** Around 240 million people in the world have hepatitis B, and 8-16 million of these infections are caused by unsafe injections.
- **HEPATITIS C** Unsafe injections are one of the most common causes of hepatitis C. As many as 130-150 million people globally are infected with this virus, which is a major cause of chronic liver disease.
- **HIV** Almost 78 million people have been infected with HIV since the beginning of the epidemic. Although sexual transmission is the most common way to contract HIV, it can also be spread through re-use of syringes and needles.



SYMPTOMS OF ACUTE HEPATITIS:

- Yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice)
- Dark urine
- Extreme tiredness
- Nausea, vomiting and stomach pain

PREVENTION IS THE BEST MEDICINE

✓ MEDICINES TAKEN BY MOUTH ARE SAFE, AND THEY WORK

- If you are prescribed an injection, ask your health care provider if the medicine you need is available to be taken by mouth.

✓ MAKE SMART INJECTION CHOICES

- Making smart injection choices will significantly reduce or rule out your risk of infection.
- If you have to have an injection, make sure you see that the syringe and needle are taken from a new, sealed and undamaged package.
- Make sure every injection you are given follows safe hygiene standards.

Ask your health care provider for alternatives. Always say you prefer oral medications if they are available.



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



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