MAKE SMART INJECTION CHOICES

SAFE INJECTION PRACTICES

For Health Care Providers

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

The World Health Organization (WHO) 2015 Guidelines recommend rational use of injections, safe injection practices and the exclusive use of safety-engineered syringes for all types of injections by 2020. Safety-engineered syringes exist for both immunization and therapeutic use and have mechanisms preventing re-use of the device [re-use prevention (RUP) syringe] and/or protecting health care providers from needle-stick injuries [sharp injury protection (SIP) feature].

Prescribers and health care providers have a key role to play in making the right choices that support safe injections and reduce unnecessary injections.

---

HOW CAN AN INJECTION BE UNSAFE?

SAFETY FIRST

One of the most effective ways to avoid injection-associated infections is to reduce the number of injections given in hospitals and clinics.

Most oral medications (e.g., antibiotics, vitamins and painkillers) are absorbed well and rapidly in the digestive tract. Clinical trials also show that for most common conditions the use of injections is not associated with higher cure rates or faster healing.\(^5\)

In most cases, injections should only be used:

- For serious and life-threatening illness where they are recommended by treatment guidelines.
- When patients are unable to swallow.
- When patients vomit profusely.
- When there is no effective oral medication or the absorption process is significantly altered.

UNSAFE INJECTION PRACTICES

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

- Lack of awareness of the risks of unsafe injections.
- Overuse of injections for illnesses for which effective oral medications exist.
- Needle-stick injuries to health care workers from recapping needles.
- Lack of clean work spaces.
- Re-use of syringes because of shortages of syringes.
- Unsafe sharps collection and waste management.

PREVENT AVOIDABLE INFECTIONS

Always use safety-engineered syringes, show your patients your new syringe package and explain that they prevent re-use. This will help increase awareness of how to keep safe and prevent avoidable infections.

WHO recommends health care providers should focus on the following 7 steps that make every injection safe.

STEP 1: Clean work space.

STEP 2: Hand hygiene.

STEP 3: Sterile and new syringe and needle, with re-use prevention and/or injury protection feature whenever possible.

STEP 4: Sterile vial of medication and diluent.

STEP 5: Skin disinfection.

STEP 6: Appropriate collection of sharps.

STEP 7: Appropriate waste management.

By following these simple steps, you take key actions to ensure the risks of unsafe injections are avoided.

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