WATER

How to reduce the risk of abscesses, swelling, and infections

NO ADDED RISK

NO ADDED RISK OF BACTERIAL INFECTION

UNOPENED AMPOULE OF STERILE WATER FOR INJECTIONS

Manufactured for medical use, so therefore completely safe if used once and surplus is thrown away.

NO ADDED RISK OF BACTERIAL INFECTION

WATER BOILED IN A KETTLE AND THEN COOLED

Good enough: will kill all organisms, is easy for most, and isn't too much trouble. If you haven't got a water amp, use water from a recently boiled kettle.

LOW RISK OF BACTERIAL INFECTION

COLD WATER FRESHLY RUN FROM THE KITCHEN TAP

Likely to come from the rising main, and, in the UK, will be very clean. Better than water from the bathroom which may have come from a tank in the loft.

RISK OF BACTERIA

HOT WATER FROM A TAP

Hot water tanks aren't usually hot enough to kill bacteria — avoid using hot water taps, cold is better.

RISK OF BACTERIA

BOTTLED WATER

It may be pure, but it can have bacteria in it — especially if someone has drunk from it. Pour into the cap and draw up from there so you don't contaminate the bottle further.

MEDIUM TO HIGH RISK OF BACTERIA

SHARED CUP OF WATER

Could have bacteria from the needle, or even blood.

Throw it away, and get fresh.

MEDIUM TO HIGH RISK OF BACTERIA

PART-USED AMPOULE OF WATER FOR INJECTIONS

Could be contaminated by a needle, even a small risk of viral infection if there is blood in it.

Tap water is safer: throw away part-used amps

HIGH RISK OF BACTERIAL INFECTION

TOILET WATER

Risk can be reduced by flushing the toilet and catching the water before it enters the bowl. Look out for empty bottles you can get filled from a tap.

VERY HIGH RISK OF BACTERIAL INFECTION

PUDDLE WATER OR SALIVA

Too dangerous to be a last resort: try asking people for their almost empty bottles of water.

TOO MUCH ACID
INCREASES THE RISK OF INFECTIONS

Having your solution too acidic causes tissue damage, making it vulnerable to infection. You don't need a whole sachet for less than a gram of heroin.

HIGH RISK OF BACTERIAL INFECTION

WATER

Infections of the skin and tissues around injection sites are increasing, and can cause serious – even life threatening – illness.

We used to worry a lot about the water used to dissolve the drugs, thinking it could be both the source of HIV and hepatitis C infection (if it had someone elses blood in it), and also bacteria to cause infections around the injecting site.

But now it looks like it would be really hard for there to be enough blood in water to cause a viral infection, and that the main cause of the infections is bacteria on the skin and/or damage to tissue because the solution has too much acid in it.

This leaflet lists the places you can get water to dissolve drugs in order of risk – safest first, but has been completely rewritten to stress the importance of (if you can):

- **Washing skin** with soap and water before injecting;

- **Not adding too much acid** to the solution;

- **Using new sterile equipment** each time (to reduce bacteria, and tissue damage);

- **Not injecting through skin that is red, hot, inflammed, or sore;** and

- **Getting medical help** to treat infections early.

Sheffield pharmacy needle exchanges will no longer be providing sterile water. Last orders for sterile water from pharmacies will be taken on 27th March 2019 and once these have run out, they will not be replaced.

If you can use cooled, recently boiled water from a clean kettle it will be sterile, and will not increase the risk of infection. This is the best alternative.

Water for injections is still at the Fitzwilliam Centre, Fitzwilliam Street, and the Sidney Street Service, 44 Sidney Street, Sheffield, or to buy online at exchangesupplies.org.