Wound Care

**Preventing Wounds & Safer Use:**

There are steps that can be taken to reduce the likelihood of wounds associated with injection drug use:

▪ Use sterile supplies (syringes, sterile water, cotton, cooker, etc.) and thoroughly wash your hands every time you inject drugs.

 ▪ One needle, one use. Do not share needles with others and do no re-use your own needle. Needles are cheaply made and become dull after one attempt.

 ▪ No sharing. No sharing needles, cookers, wipes, or tourniquets. All supplies needed to inject have the potential to pass infectious disease.

 ▪ Rotate injection sites. Scar tissue develops under the injection site. Rotate injection sites to prevent physical irritation and to allow time for each injection site to heal.

▪ Clean your injection site using an alcohol wipe or soap and water thoroughly. Choose injection sites that will be easy to keep clean (e.g., arms).

* If you miss a shot, apply ice or frozen items (frozen bagged food, snow, cold drink) on the same day and elevate. If swelling occurs the next day, apply heat regularly using a cloth soaked in hot water, or use a hand warmer.

Avoid injection at or below the affected area.

Do not squeeze or poke an abscess. This can introduce more bacteria to the wound.

If things don’t improve after 3 days, or if you are experiencing chills, fever, extreme fatigue or pain in the abscess, seek medical attention. This may be a blood infection, which could be deadly.

* Clean wound, apply ointment and bandage it.

 ▪ Do not use alone. When possible, take turns. Observe for signs and symptoms of overdose. If people use the same supply at the same time, and that supply is laced, or not the potency they expect, then both people are at risk of an overdose at the same time, and will be unable to help each other.

▪ Plan ahead. Stock up on sterile needles, cotton, sterile water, and a variety of needle sizes. Have a sharps container on hand.

▪ Have a safety plan for every time you use. Ensure someone is available to intervene in an emergency if needed. If you are using alone, text someone before and after use. Leave the door unlocked. Leave your naloxone kit in plain sight.

 ▪ Carry naloxone. Train those around you to use and carry naloxone. Even if the drug you use primarily is not an opioid (e.g., cocaine, methamphetamine), it is possible that it is laced with fentanyl and fentanyl analogs. Opioids cause respiratory depression, or trouble breathing. Carry naloxone to be prepared for an overdose emergency.