



RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE POLICIES TO facilitate use of sterile alcohol swabs for each injection



DISTRIBUTE SUPPLIES

- Single-use, individually pre-packaged, and sterile alcohol swabs
- Offer sterile alcohol swabs with each needle, sterile water, cooker and sterile filter provided
- Based on the quantity requested by clients with no limits

EDUCATE ABOUT

- Correct single person use of alcohol swabs
- HIV- and HCV-related risks associated with sharing swabs
- Risks of bacterial infection if the injection site is not cleaned with an alcohol swab prior to injection
- Risks of consumption of the non-beverage alcohol in the swabs
- Using a dry swab or tissue post-injection instead of an alcohol swab
- Safer use of equipment
- Safer injection practices
- Overdose prevention practices

DISPOSE

- Dispose of used swabs in accordance with local regulations for biomedical waste
- Offer multiple sizes of biohazard containers for safe disposal
- Offer multiple, convenient locations for safe disposal in rural, remote, and urban settings

RISKS

- Previously used swabs may contain blood contaminated with HIV, HCV, and/or HBV
- Transmission may occur if swabs contaminated with HIV, HCV, and HBV are used by more than one person
- Some used swabs may have more residual blood than syringes
- Skin and soft tissue abscesses and endocarditis are more common among those who do not clean the injection sites

BEHAVIORS

- People who use drugs may be less likely to use a new alcohol swabs prior to injection if they:
 - Are experiencing withdrawal and/or strong craving
 - Have already prepared their 'shot'
 - Are intoxicated and forget to do so
 - Have limited access to alcohol swabs
 - Dislike using alcohol swabs
- Alcohol swabs are occasionally shared among people who inject drugs but overall are shared less frequently than other safer injection supplies
- Some people may ingest "surrogate alcohol" (non-beverage alcohol) from alcohol swabs, hand sanitizers and rubbing alcohol
- Blood-tainted swabs may indicate improper use of alcohol swabs (i.e., post-injection use)