



MAKE SMART INJECTION CHOICES

SAFE INJECTION PRACTICES



World Health
Organization

SAFE INJECTION CHOICES MATTER



Do you really need to give an injection?
What safe choices should you make when giving an injection?

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.

BE A SKILLFULL HEALTH CARE PROVIDER: TALK TO YOUR PATIENTS

As a health care provider, you have a key role to play in making the right prescription decisions and helping patients understand what treatment they are receiving.

- If a medication is prescribed, consider the method of administration.
- Ask yourself: is an injection really needed, or is there an oral alternative?

Surveys in Indonesia and Romania showed that in situations when a patient asked for an injection and the health care provider informed the patient that an oral medicine would work equally well, the patient was then convinced and did not insist on having the injection.^{3,4}

1. Pepin et al. Evolution of the global use of unsafe medical injections, 2000-2010. PLoS One. 2013 Dec 8;12:e80948.

2. Pepin et al. Evolution of the global burden of viral infections from unsafe medical injections, 2000-2010. PLoS One. 2014 Jun 9;9(6):e99677.

3. CDC. Unpublished data, 1998.

HOW CAN AN INJECTION BE UNSAFE?



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.

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.



4. Hadiyono et al. Interactional group discussion: results of a controlled trial using a behavioural intervention to reduce the use of injections in public health facilities. Soc Sci Med. 1996 Apr;42(8):1177-83.
5. Unpublished review by WHO, CDC and University of Washington, 2002-3.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

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