



MAKE SMART INJECTION CHOICES

SAFE INJECTIONS FOR PATIENTS AND COMMUNITIES



For Patient Associations



**World Health
Organization**

SAFE INJECTION CHOICES MATTER



Patient associations can help save lives by communicating with patients and communities to help them avoid the risk of acquiring potentially deadly infections from unsafe injections and supporting and advocating for safe injection programmes.

Safe injections are important to protect human health and treat diseases, but many injections around the world **put lives at risk** and cause 1.67 million hepatitis B infections,

more than 315 000 hepatitis C infections and almost 34 000 human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infections every year.

In some countries up to 70% of injections are unnecessary and/or could be replaced by medications available in an oral form whenever possible, as these are just as effective.

Patient associations can help empower patients to make smart injection choices

Patient associations are in the best position to communicate with patients and their families, and disseminate information and education about the dangers of unsafe injections and safe injection practices, enabling patients to make smart injection choices for themselves, and their families.

People can ask their health care provider for alternatives

An injection is not always the best or most effective treatment. Patients should be aware that if they are prescribed an injection, they can ask their health care provider if the medicine they need is available in oral form, and let them know if they would prefer this method of treatment.

HOW CAN AN INJECTION BE UNSAFE?

UNSAFE INJECTION PRACTICES

If a patient is injected with a syringe that has been used on another person there is a real risk they may get an infection.

The global burden of unsafe injection practices is caused by avoidable situations and practices including:

- ❌ Overuse of injections for illnesses for which oral medications are available and are recommended as first line treatment.
- ❌ Lack of clean work spaces.
- ❌ Re-use of syringes and needles, and other injection equipment.
- ❌ Unsafe collection and management of used injection.



SAFETY FIRST

When injections are required, the World Health Organization recommends safety-engineered syringes for both immunization and therapeutic use; these syringes are those which have mechanisms preventing re-use of the device and/or protecting health care workers from injuries from a needle. Hundreds of thousands of people could be protected from infections acquired through unsafe injections by using syringes that cannot be used more than once.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

WORKING TOGETHER

Education and information provided and endorsed by patient associations will empower people to make smart injection choices.

Once they have been informed and empowered patients can play an important role in ensuring their own safety by:

- ✓ Asking if there is an oral alternative available, or if an injection is needed.
- ✓ Making sure the syringe and needle are taken from a new, sealed and undamaged package.
- ✓ Checking that the health care provider giving the injection follows safe hygiene standards.



In addition to education and information, patient associations can also:

- ✓ Help people by offering a number of support tools on making safe injection choices, and or signposting them to WHO materials.
- ✓ Provide a forum for people to meet each other, share experiences about safe injection choices and provide on-going support for patients and their families.
- ✓ Represent patient views on issues surrounding safe injections, to help shape the current and future health care environment by making their collective voices heard.
- ✓ Help the industry to understand patients' needs to guide them in developing new injection equipment and providing patient support.
- ✓ Provide insights for health care professionals on patients' needs when receiving injections to help them support their patients.

For further information and access to educational materials please visit:

www.who.int/infection-prevention