

OPIOIDS:

REDUCING
INJECTION
RISKS

PRODUCED BY

La Direction des communications du ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux

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Masculine pronouns are used generically in this document.

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OPIOIDS : REDUCING INJECTION RISKS

Opioids (*hydromorphone, morphine* or *oxycodone*) are usually taken orally, in capsule or pill form. These medications contain wax, cellulose or talc; if they are injected, the following complications can occur:

- Blood clots
- Lung problems
- Lesions that can lead to amputation

To reduce the risks of developing these complications, use proper opioid injection methods (two filters, addition of water, heating).

When you use new equipment, you also reduce the risk of getting infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and hepatitis C virus (HCV).



EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Alcohol swab



Maxicup®



Maxicup® contains
5 cc sterile cooker,
handle, cotton filter, dry swab



Sterifilt®



Tourniquet



Sterile water



Syringe, 3 cc



Needle



- Risks for HIV and HCV transmission are higher when **the needle is not attached to the syringe**. There is more dead space so it retains more blood.
- If you already have HIV or HCV, you should still use new injection equipment each time you inject, because you can catch these infections more than once. Each new infection can make you sicker than you were previously.

BEFORE INJECTING

Clean hands and a clean surface on which to put the injection equipment

- 1- Wash your hands with soap and water, or use an antiseptic gel or alcohol swabs.



- 2- Clean the preparation surface with a clean cloth or alcohol swabs before putting your injection equipment on it. If possible put a clean mat on the preparation surface.



PREPARE THE STERILE COOKER (MAXICUP®)

Unwrap the Maxicup® carefully so the contents don't fall out of the package.



Take the cup out: make sure you don't touch the inside of the cup to keep it sterile. Don't touch the filter and leave it in the package.

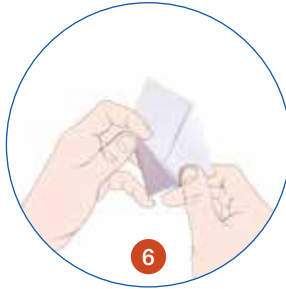
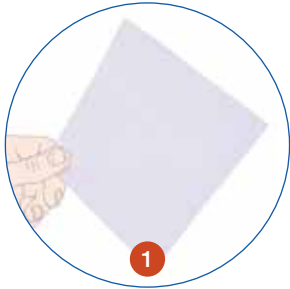
It is important to insert the handle before using the Maxicup®. This will

- avoid burns;
- make it easier to hold;
- make it more stable.



PREPARE THE POWDER

Before crushing the pill or capsule, make an envelope with a piece of paper, or take out the page 9 of this pamphlet and fold it along the dotted lines.



PREPARE THE POWDER (CONT'D)



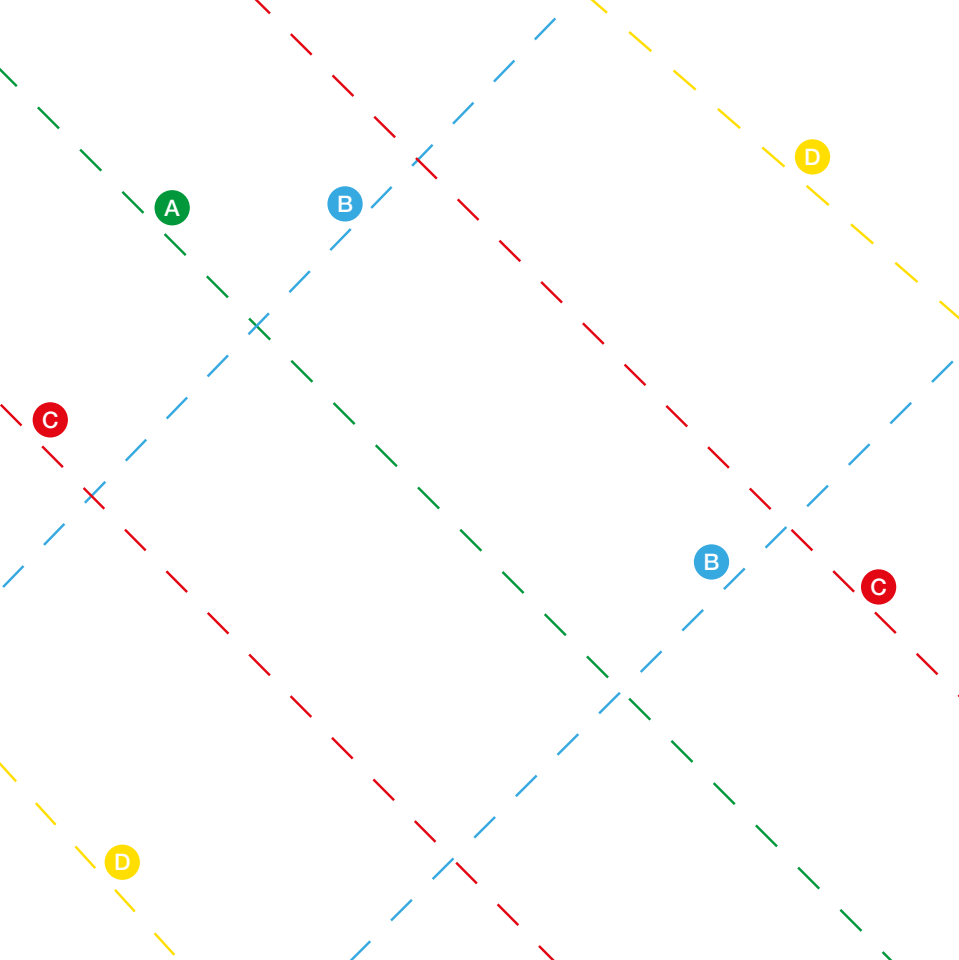
Place the pill or beads from the capsule into the envelope and crush with a spoon or lighter.



- Finely-crushed pills or beads reduce risks of blocked veins and infection.
- Don't use your teeth to cut or crush the pills.
- Adding vitamin C or vinegar does not help dissolve the powder or make the active substance more potent. However, it can damage veins or skin at the point of injection. Never add lemon juice to the powder.

TEAR OUT THIS PAGE

follow the letters and fold
along the corresponding
lines to make an envelope
you can use to prepare
the powder.



PREPARE THE SOLUTION

Pour the solution into the cup and add the maximum amount of sterile water. This helps dissolve the powder without reducing the effects of the substance.



Heat the solution until small bubbles appear; this will dissolve the solution better.

Open the syringe package. Don't touch the plunger.



Mix the solution with the syringe plunger.

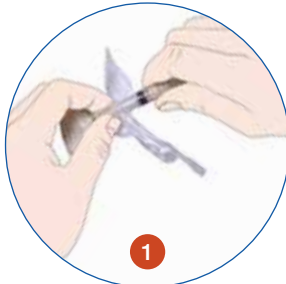
The powder has to be dissolved well in water.

Let the solution cool after cooking so the wax can solidify and you won't inject it. However, if you don't let the solution cool, don't draw the solution from the top surface in the cup. That is where the wax collects.

FILTER THE SOLUTION WITH THE STERIFILT® AND THE COTTON FILTER

While the solution cools, open the Sterifilt® package. Don't take the filter out of the package to avoid touching it with your fingers.

Push the Sterifilt® firmly onto the syringe.



Let the cotton filter fall into the cooker, without touching it with your fingers.



Rest the membrane of the Sterifilt® on the cotton filter that is already in the solution.



Slowly draw the solution up into the barrel of the syringe.

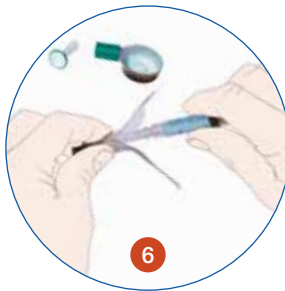


The Sterifilt® attaches directly onto a 1/2, 1 or 3 cc syringe with or without a needle.

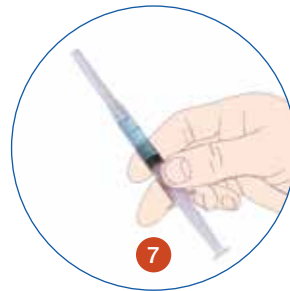
FILTER THE SOLUTION WITH THE STERIFILT® AND THE COTTON FILTER (CONT'D)



Remove the Sterifilt® from the syringe.



For 3 cc syringes, keep the cap on the needle and insert it into the tip of the syringe. Push and twist the needle so it is fixed tightly.

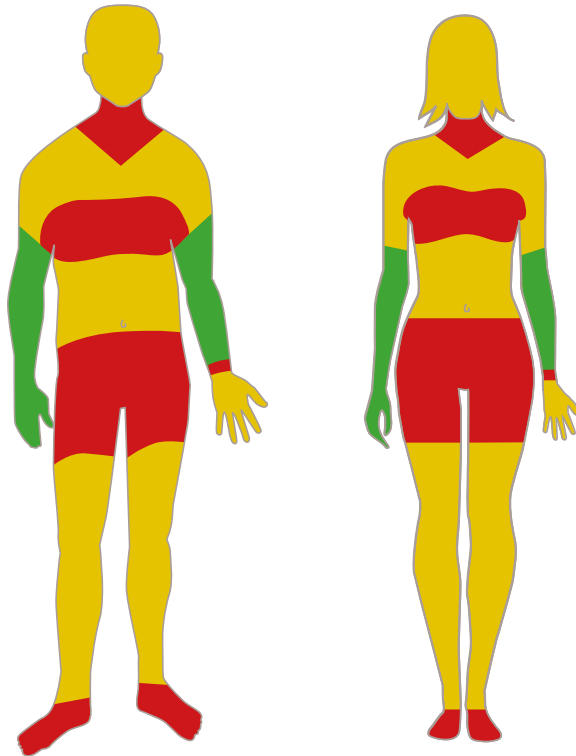


Remove air bubbles.

- The cotton filter that comes with the Maxicup® is not enough to filter out opioid residue. This is why you also have to filter the solution with the Sterifilt®. Double filtering preserves the needle and your veins. The filtered liquid is clear but doesn't lessen the active substance's effect.
- Filters can't be reused because they are already full of residue after the first use.

LEVEL OF RISKS DEPENDING ON WHERE YOU INJECT

- Low risks
- Medium risks
- High risks



USE A TOURNIQUET BEFORE INJECTING

Loop the tourniquet around your arm, above your elbow. Hold the end on the inside of your arm with your thumb and let the other end hang on the outside of your arm.

Holding the tourniquet in place with your thumb, pick up the loose end with your free fingers and stretch it out lightly.

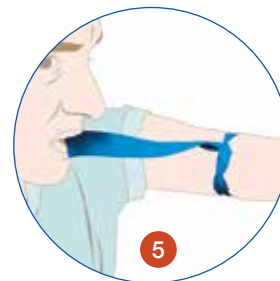
Don't share
your tourniquet.
Replace it
regularly.



Keep it extended and place the loose end of the tourniquet over the other end. Make sure to keep it stretched so it stays in place.

Make a small loop to slide the free end between the tie and the arm.

Grab the loose end in your mouth and pull.



PROCEED WITH THE INJECTION

Disinfect the skin at and around the point of injection using an alcohol swab.



Place the needle at a 45 degree angle, with the bevel pointing up. Insert the needle into the vein.



Draw back on the plunger a bit to make sure it is in the vein. The blood that flows into the syringe should be dark red.



Before injecting, release the tourniquet, using your mouth to pull on the loose end.



Inject the solution **slowly**.

Before injecting, release the tourniquet.

AFTER INJECTING

Apply pressure to the injection site with a **dry swab** for several minutes.



Put the needle and syringe into a used-needle container.



Protect the environment and other people!

Throw out the rest of the equipment in a garbage can.



CONCLUSION

To reduce the risks linked to opioid injection and have more of the active substance (reduce loss), the following is recommended:



Use more water
and a 3 cc syringe



Use a cotton swab and Sterifilt®
combination



Cook the solution to have
less residue and fewer bacteria

HELP AND RESOURCES

Here is the logo that identifies places (community groups, pharmacies, CLSCs and hospitals) where you can get **free** new injection equipment and a used-needle container, as well as where you can return the container.



Call Info-Santé 811 toll-free or go to the *Finding a Resource* section at sante.gouv.qc.ca to find out where you can

- get new equipment;
- get vaccinated against hepatitis A and B; and
- get tested for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV and hepatitis.

If you want to find out more about drug addiction resources, contact the following (toll-free):

1-800-265-2626



Montréal area: 514 527-2626
drogue-aidereference.qc.ca



To prevent the risks linked to opioid overdose,

- avoid using when you're alone,
- when you're in a group, don't all use at the same time,
- have naloxone on hand,
- use supervised injection services, when available.

Signs of opioid overdose

- Extreme sleepiness
- Trouble standing or talking
- Inability to focus and very small pupils
- Irregular breathing, lips turning blue, pale face
- Inability to stay awake

In case of overdose

- Give the person naloxone.
- Call **9-1-1** and tell them the person is having an opioid overdose.
- Start CPR, if necessary.

**EMERGENCY
9-1-1**