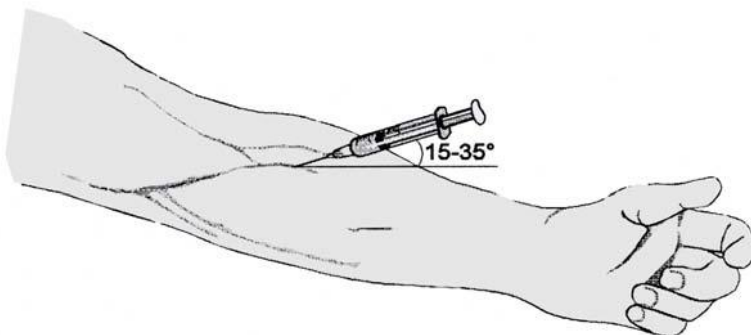


Self-injecting

- Use a new needle and syringe each time. At least use a new needle to avoid clogged or broken needles and infections (hepatitis B/C, HIV, bacteria)
- Choose a different injection site each time, to avoid scars, bruises, abscesses, swellings, sunken veins or problems with blood circulation.
- Find the biggest veins and switch veins each time. If this is impossible, find a new spot a least 2.5 cm (1 inch) from the spot you used last.
- Clean the injection site with an alcohol swab and wait till the alcohol has evaporated. Then it is effective and doesn't hurt when the needle is being inserted.
- A tourniquet helps the veins to dilate. Use an elastic band which is easy to loosen e.g. knicker elastic. If you inject in your arm, first let it hang down to fill with blood and then tie off. Don't tie off too tight or for too long.
- If you do not succeed in finding a vein, untie the tourniquet, do some physical exercise and tie off once again. Make sure you can open the tourniquet before pulling the needle out. For instance: keep the pulled end of the tourniquet in your mouth. If you become too stoned your mouth will fall open and automatically the tourniquet unties.
- Do not forget to remove the air from the syringe. Keep the syringe upright, if necessary flick any air bubbles out and push the piston carefully until no air is left).
- It is safer to untie the tourniquet before pushing the plunger, because if you overdose (lose consciousness) with a tight tourniquet you will almost certainly lose that part of the body which is tied off. For many people this is not possible because if they untie the tourniquet they also "lose" their vein. It is always useful to have someone with you, just in case.
- Insert the needle at an angle of 15° - 35° in the direction of your heart with the point of the needle pointing down. In this way the needle slides easily into the vein.



- Veins don't roll away if you pull them tight with a finger or the side of your hand: the needle is now between the tourniquet and the finger that holds your vein tight.
- If you see dark red blood when you pull back the plunger, you are in a vein. If the blood is pink or the plunger is pushed back by itself, you have hit an artery.
- When this happens immediately untie the tourniquet and pull out the needle. Press on the spot with a bandage for at least 5 minutes until you are sure it has stopped bleeding.
- Hitting an artery can cause serious problems, so medical help is advisable.
- When you know you are in a vein push the plunger home slowly. Check several times if you are still in the vein by pulling back the plunger a little. With cocaine you may not notice if you are next to a vein. If the needle slips out of the vein during injecting, untie the tourniquet and choose another spot. The needle won't clog easy if you draw up a little extra cold water. Don't forget to remove the air.
- When you are finished, and you did not yet, do it now, untie the tourniquet and remove the syringe in the opposite direction to the way you have inserted it. Apply pressure to keep the injection site closed for a short while (for most people till the rush has finished), preferably with your arm or leg held up to prevent possible bleeding underneath the skin.
- If you miss the vein or have subcutaneous bleeding, put on some ointment, (heparin/herodoid) or salted water and cover it with pressure bandages. Missed hits and subcutaneous bleeding can lead to abscesses.
- Don't forget to dispose of your used syringe in a safe way or exchange it for a clean one.

For more information on safer injecting and safe injecting material, a recent manual was produced by the American Harm Reduction Coalition and can be found at <http://harmreduction.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/getting-off-right.pdf>

