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Injecting Hormones

Some Tips for Injecting Intramuscularly or Intravenously

by Dash Grey

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Body Alchemy, by Loren Cameron. His work recalls a beautiful self-portrait, self-injecting into the buttock.

The Needle and Syringe program provides new injecting equipment to anyone injecting hormones or other drugs. We do this to minimise the risks of H.I.V. and other blood-borne viruses like Hepatitis C and Hepatitis B.

Whether you are injecting hormones or other drugs you need to get new and clean equipment.

Whether you are injecting hormones or other drugs you need to get new and clean equipment. You can get a supply of needles, syringes, swabs, filters and water from the Gender Centre's N.S.P.

Hormone drugs designed to be injected usually come in an oily solution and because they need to be absorbed into the body slowly, should be injected intramuscularly, i.e. into muscles. Most commonly the muscles involved here are either the buttocks or the thighs. Anyone who knows photography and Loren Cameron's work may recall a beautiful self-portrait of Loren Cameron self-injecting into the buttock.

We would always advise getting hormones medically prescribed. This way you know exactly what you are getting and you can be monitored and advised by your doctor. If you are taking hormones by intramuscular injection, a doctor can administer the injection or in consultation with your doctor you may self-inject. If you intend to self-inject get your doctor

to show you how and make sure you are confident in the process before doing it by yourself. Needles for injecting into muscles are longer in length and have a larger gauge than the needles used for intravenous injections so follow the advice from your doctor about what best suits your needs.

It is generally recommended that you alternate injecting sites, i.e. if you inject into the thigh alternate between the left and right thigh each injection and avoid injecting into the exact same place as last time. This gives the tissue you are injecting into adequate time to repair. When you are injecting into muscle you should not see any blood in the syringe on drawback. If you do, it means you probably have hit a vein and need to withdraw the needle and either inject a centimetre back or start again (Remember don't use needles more than once as they blunt with the first injection). If there is pain or difficulty with the injection don't push through or ignore it, but get advice.

If you are injecting drugs like speed, ice or heroin then you are most likely to be doing so intravenously i.e. into veins. With any illicit drug you can never be exactly sure what you are getting so caution and care are necessary. The most common site of injecting intravenously is between the forearm and upper arm but veins are delicate structures and continued injecting will often cause damage. Once again, rotating injection sites is a good idea but it is generally recommended to avoid injecting into the neck, groin or the hands or feet. You can get advice about injecting and vein care from any Needle Syringe program (N.S.P.), including the Gender Centre. N.U.A.A., the New South Wales Users group is also a good place for information and advice.

Whether injecting intramuscularly or intravenously here are some general tips:

- Find a safe, secure spot where you are not likely to be disturbed;
- Get all your new equipment ready;
- Have the right equipment;
- Wash your hands before and after injecting;
- Take your time, try not to rush; and
- Dispose of your equipment safely (yellow sharps disposal bins can be picked up from your nearest N.S.P. or take your used equipment to your N.S.P. to place in their sharps bin)

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The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities, which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, family members and friends in New South Wales. We are an accommodation service and also act as an education, support, training and referral resource centre to other organisations and service providers. The Gender Centre is committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service, which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.