City and County of San Francisco

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Important Information for Injection Drug Users

Recent Cases of Necrotizing Soft-Tissue Infections

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WHAT'S GOING ON?

- **In San Francisco over the last two weeks there have been 5 cases of necrotizing soft-tissue infections (also known as necrotizing fasciitis.)**
- **Five people have been hospitalized.**
- **Skin-popping and muscling put people at higher risk, but the disease can also be caused by IV injection.**

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- **Redness, swelling and pain around the injection site**
- **Pain may be much greater than an abscess or cellulitis**
- **Initially may seem similar to abscess or cellulitis, but gets worse FAST**
- **May have fever and chills**
- **Antibiotic pills and ointments will not cure it. Surgery is needed to drain the infection.**
- **Without immediate proper treatment, it may lead to amputation or even death.**

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF?

You can reduce your risk of getting a necrotizing soft-tissue infection.

- **Not injecting drugs will prevent you from getting this disease.**
- **If you choose to use, inject with a new sterile syringe every time. Use needle exchange.**
- **Skin-popping or muscling may increase your chances of getting this disease.**
- **Do not re-use syringes, even your own. If you must re-use, make sure you clean the syringe well with bleach. Leave syringe in bleach for 2 minutes.**
- **Do not share needles, syringes, cookers, cottons, mixing or rinse water with anybody.**
- **Clean your skin thoroughly by scrubbing with lots of soap and hot water before injecting.**
- **If you can't use soap and hot water, clean your skin with alcohol pads before injecting.**

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

- **IF YOU HAVE ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS, DON'T WAIT!**
- **GO IMMEDIATELY TO THE NEAREST EMERGENCY ROOM OR GO TO SAN FRANCISCO GENERAL HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT AT 1001 POTRERO AVENUE, OR CALL 911.**

Additional copies of this information are available on our website: www.sfdph.org/cdcp. Click on the Health Alerts link in the left hand column.