Important Information for Injection Drug Users

Recent Cases of Necrotizing Soft-Tissue Infections
November 17, 2005

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](http://www.sfdph.org/cdcp). Click on the Health Alerts link in the left hand column.