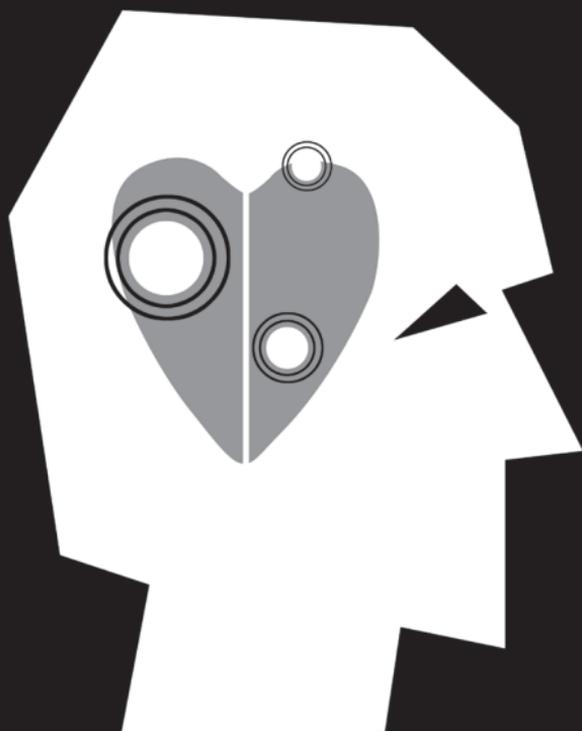


ENGLISH

**Fixpunkt** Safer Use Infos



**Endocarditis**

## WHAT IS ENDOCARDITIS?

Endocarditis is a bacterial infection of the valves of the heart, which can cause serious damage. In addition to damaging the heart itself, the infection can spread to the brain, the lungs, the kidneys and other organs and cause abscesses.

## HOW DOES IT HAPPEN ?

Bacteria get into the bloodstream and travel towards the heart.

One way that bacteria get into the blood is by using unsterilized needles. Try to avoid reusing needles – even your own ones – because they can easily pick up bacteria, which live everywhere, all the time. Even if a new, sterile needle is used, bacteria from the skin can get into your veins. There's an increased probability for this when you inject methadone syrup from the black market. Before using a needle, wash your skin carefully with soap and water, dry the skin, and then wipe the area with alcohol pads (for more information see "Tips for vein care"). Don't lick your skin in the area. Don't lick the needle.

***Use sterile water and sterile filters.***

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF ENDOCARDITIS?

The usual symptoms are similar to symptoms caused by many other illnesses: fever, tiredness, generally feeling lousy, headache, soaking sweats at night, or chest pain. These symptoms can last from a few days to several weeks. If you have any of these persisting symptoms, you should talk to a nurse or a doctor. It may not be endocarditis, but it could be another severe illness. In any case, it is important that you should protect yourself and find out what is going on.

***Endocarditis can kill you if not treated accordingly!***

## HOW IS ENDOCARDITIS DIAGNOSED ?

There are special tests that can detect the type of bacteria in your blood. Additionally, an ultrasound examination can show how severe the damage is to the heart valves.

These are fairly simple tests, but they require special equipment and therefore are often done in the hospital.

## HOW IS ENDOCARDITIS TREATED ?

Treatment usually takes between two and four weeks in the hospital. Antibiotics are given directly into the blood via an intravenous drip. The chance of recovery is very good if the disease is treated in time.

## HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF ?

Be as careful as possible when using needles. Use sterile water to dissolve drugs. Wash your skin and hands with soap and clean water. You can use alcohol pads if you don't have access to soap and water. Do not lick your skin at the injection site, and do not lick the needle. Normal bacteria in the mouth can cause endocarditis if it gets into the blood. Even if you are very careful with needles and cleaning, be alert and react as soon as possible if you notice any symptoms.

## SUMMARY

- Use new, sterile needles with every injection
- Clean your skin and hands before injecting
- Use sterile water, filters, and clean spoons
- If you notice any symptoms, see a doctor immediately

## SOURCE

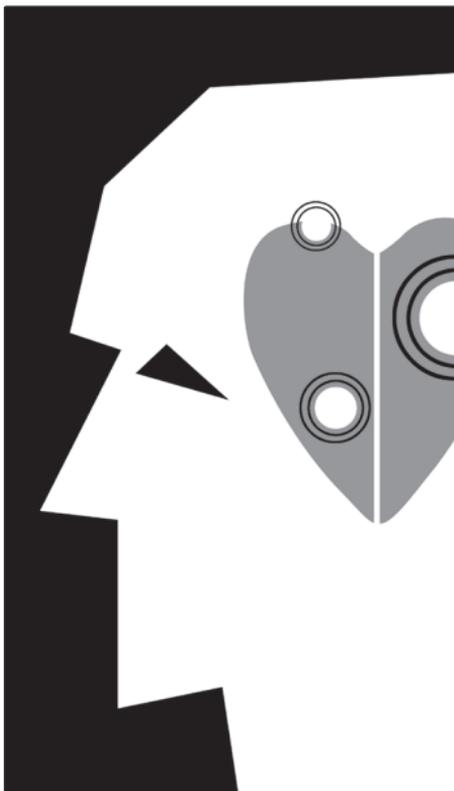
*This brochure contains information originally produced by the HIV/AIDS Program, Public Health Seattle & King County, U.S.A., <http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/communicable-diseases/hiv-std/patients/drug-use-harm-reduction.aspx>*

## FURTHER INFORMATION

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