

# HOW DO INFECTED NEEDLES PLAY A ROLE IN HIV INFECTION?

The National Institute on Drug Abuse's research data confirmed that drug abuse is the single largest factor of the spread of HIV/AIDS in this country, and that half of all new infections occur through injecting drug users. Transmission of HIV is also possible through tattoo needle injury.

HIV infection spreads easily when people share drug use equipment. Sharing equipment also spreads hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and other serious diseases.

Infected blood can be drawn up into a syringe and then be injected along with the drug into the next user's bloodstream. This is the easiest way to transmit HIV during drug use because infected blood goes directly into someone's bloodstream. Even small amounts of blood on cookers, filters, tourniquets, or in rinse water can be enough to infect another user. Blood on your hands — even small amounts —

can also be dangerous when you help someone else find a vein, steady their arm, or when you pass equipment.

To reduce the risk of HIV and hepatitis infection, never share any drug equipment and wash your hands. Carefully clean your cookers and the site you will use for injection.

The most effective way to clean a syringe is to draw up water first, then bleach and a final water rinse. Try to get all blood out of the syringe by shaking the water or bleach filled syringe vigorously for 30 seconds.

Use cold water because hot water can make the blood form clots, which makes the syringe harder to clean. To kill HIV and hepatitis viruses, leave bleach in the syringe for two full minutes. Cleaning will kill the viruses if done *PROPERLY*. Always use a new syringe if possible.



## Nebraska AIDS Education and Training Center

*A collaboration of University of Nebraska Medical Center and Nebraska AIDS Project*

For more information on transmission, you may call the Nebraska AIDS Hotline at 1-800-782-AIDS or Nebraska AIDS Project at 402-552-9260. HIV/AIDS Basic Trainings or in-services on specific topics are available through the Nebraska AIDS Education and Training Center.