

WATER HIERARCHY

WE ARE ASKED A LOT ABOUT WHAT WATER IS SAFE TO USE FOR INJECTION.

It is very tricky to keep the whole injecting process sterile, because we need to think about the quality of the water as well as the container we got it from (ampoule, bottle, tap, kettle, cup, cistern) and the container (fit, spoon, baggie) we are mixing it in, right through to swabbing our arm to seal the deal. Unless you are using pharmaceuticals, the gear won't be sterile, but we do what we can!

We have reproduced what is known as the "Water Hierarchy", that shows the risk level of different sources of water. The main thing to remember is just because it is safe enough to drink doesn't mean it is safe enough to put in your vein, and if you wouldn't drink it, don't inject it.



NO RISK



Unopened ampoule of sterile water injections



Water boiled in a kettle then cooled

LOW RISK



Cold water freshly run from the kitchen tap



Hot water from a tap

MEDIUM TO HIGH RISK



Bottled water



Toilet water

HIGH RISK



Part-used ampoule of water for injections



Puddle water



Shared cup of water

A FEW OTHER THINGS:

- Small disposable ampoules of water are given out at some NSPs and for sale at some chemists. This is the only source of water made specifically for injecting into veins and where both the water and the packaging are guaranteed sterile and free from impurities.
- When we are talking about water from the tap, we are talking about town water with working pipes. If you have tank water or corroded pipes, this will obviously affect how safe the water is.
- It is better to use unboiled, unfiltered water straight from the cold tap than water that has been hanging around opened, even if it is from a used, opened ampoule of the kind given out by NSPs.
- Let water from the tap run for a short while before use if you are not going to boil it.
- Bottled water is problematic because while it is packed sterile enough for drinking it is not sterile enough for veins. Also when water stands without movement, it grows bacteria quite quickly. That's why flowing tap water is better than standing bottled water or even distilled water or filtered water that requires sitting for any length of time.