

# JUST WHAT ARE YOU SHARING ?

## A project on injecting drug use in the Victorian Aboriginal community.

VACCHO and Anex travelled around Victoria to learn more about injecting drug use and HIV risk in the Aboriginal community. We spoke with 69 Aboriginal people who inject drugs about their injecting practices, sexual health, and use of health services. Many spoke to us about sharing injecting equipment and when and with whom they feel it's safe to do so. Here is a little of what they had to say...

Some Aboriginal people who inject drugs feel its ok to share injecting equipment with their sexual partner, especially if they do not regularly use condoms when having sex. This is because they believed they would have already been exposed to any viruses their partner may have during sex. While this is true for some blood borne viruses (BBVs) it is NOT correct for hepatitis C, which is easily transferred through sharing injecting equipment but almost never when having sex (unless blood is present).

"I shared with my partner. Yeah and I got hep C from him... I just thought I'm sleeping with him and I just thought that whatever he's got, I got. You know what I mean? I didn't know... it was blood to blood contact or anything like that. I've learnt it all afterwards"

Intimacy and trust are two reasons why some Aboriginal people who inject drugs feel comfortable sharing injecting equipment with their sexual partner.

"I'd rather [share] with my partner... Cause I love him"

One of the problems with sharing injecting equipment, even with a sexual partner, is that people do not always know they are infected with a BBV. Trust is a big part of relationships so if you think you may have a BBV or even a STI tell your partner before you have sex and don't share your equipment. Go with your partner and get tested, that way you will know either way and you can get treatment if needed.

"I did a first aid course, also before I used I had a boyfriend that used, and I made sure I knew all about it, because he didn't...and I was scared about catching something, so I went to the [health service]...and asked them heaps of questions, and just did lots of reading"

It's important to support and care for your partner and for yourself. If your partner injects drugs but you don't its also important that you read up on safe injecting practices so you know all the facts. Ask your local health services for some information so you can look after and protect yourself and your partner from BBVs.

### REMEMBER

It's important to keep yourself and your partner safe from BBVs and STIs. One way to do that is to make sure you ALWAYS use your own clean injecting equipment and never share, even with your partner. It's just safer this way, and you and your partner will never have to worry about catching anything. Also think about going with your partner to get an STI test, as many STIs have no symptoms.

**Yiaga ba wadamba**

(Wurundjeri Language)  
the Find and Renew Projects

[www.findandrenew.org.au](http://www.findandrenew.org.au)

This research is part of the Yiaga ba wadamba (Find and Renew) Project, conducted by VACCHO in partnership with Anex. For further information about the project contact VACCHO at 5-7 Smith Street Fitzroy Vic 3065, Ph 03 9419 3350 or visit our website [www.vaccho.org.au](http://www.vaccho.org.au)