

Diagnosis

Endocarditis is usually identified by:

- blood tests
- physical examination
- heart imaging tests to look at how your heart is beating and pumping blood.



Treatment

In most cases endocarditis will be treated:

- with antibiotic treatment for 4 to 8 weeks
- in hospital
- with surgery to replace damaged heart valves in severe cases.



Prevention

The best way to lower your risk of developing endocarditis is through sterile injecting practices:

- Use new syringes and equipment every time you inject.
- Filter your drugs (use a wheel filter for injecting pills).
- Swab your skin correctly before injecting your drugs.
- Never share syringes and equipment with others.
- Safely dispose of used syringes and equipment.

Alcohol and
Other Drugs



Endocarditis

If you inject drugs, you are at increased risk of developing endocarditis.

Contact us

Needle and Syringe Program

North Richmond Community Health
23 Lennox St Richmond 3121
Phone: (03) 9418 9830

Opening hours:

Monday to Friday 8am to 7pm
Saturday & Sunday 9am to 5pm

  @nrchAUS  www.nrch.com.au



North Richmond Community Health (Wulempuri-Kertheba) stands on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people. We pay our respects to their elders, past and present.



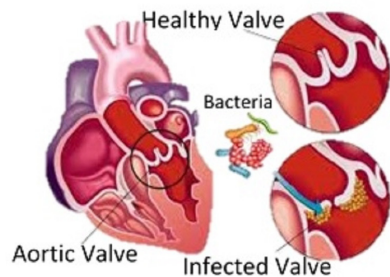
What is endocarditis?

Endocarditis is an infection of the lining of the heart or the heart valves.

It usually develops when bacteria, fungus or other germs enter the bloodstream and attach to the heart.

If not treated quickly, endocarditis can damage or destroy the heart valves. This can effect how the heart pumps blood around the body.

Endocarditis can be fatal if not treated.



Other complications

- Clumps of bacteria in the heart can break off and travel through the bloodstream.
- Loose clumps can block blood supply to the lungs, kidneys and brain.
- Blocked blood supply can prevent other organs from working properly.
- If blood supply to the brain is blocked, this can trigger a stroke.

Endocarditis and injecting drug use

If you inject drugs, you are at increased risk of developing endocarditis. This can happen through:

- direct injection of bacteria, fungi or germs that are in your mix or on your injecting equipment



- transferring bacteria living on your skin into your bloodstream, especially if you have skin infections or abscesses
- having poor dental health.



Bacteria that enters your veins when injecting can travel to your heart, where it can settle and multiply.

Symptoms

If you inject drugs, you are at increased risk of developing endocarditis. Signs and symptoms include:

- fever and chills
- excessive sweating
- chest pain
- difficulty breathing
- persistent cough
- coughing up blood
- abnormal heart rhythms (feeling like your heart is skipping a beat)
- body aches and pains
- feeling tired and weak
- swelling in your feet, legs or stomach
- red urine
- red, painless spots on the palms and the soles of the foot
- small, red, painful bumps on the fingers and toes
- loss of appetite and weight loss.

Symptoms can develop quickly or take weeks to months to develop, depending on the type of bacteria causing the infection.

If you think you could have endocarditis, talk to your GP or our nurses at the NSP.