

A [Scottish report](#) has called for [citric acid sachets](#) to be provided by needle exchanges nationwide. Since August 2003 drug workers and medical staff have been allowed to supply citric acid, an acidifier used to help dissolve heroin and other drugs for injection. Before this change needle exchanges in Lanarkshire and Glasgow in Scotland had obtained legal clearance to provide the substance to their clients. A pilot study established that 100mg was the optimal amount for a single-use sachet. Interviews with 360 exchange users at six of the busiest exchanges in the areas were used to assess how satisfactory the sachets had been.¹ Virtually all the 340 who had used an acidifier in the past three months had usually used sachets from an exchange. Though in the past most had used other sources and/or other acidifiers, over the last three months few had done so. Once available, conversion to the sachets had been rapid and resort to less satisfactory alternatives was becoming a thing of the past. Performance in dissolving the drug and safety were seen as the main advantages. Generally a sachet was sufficient for a single injection. There was some evidence that providing sachets encouraged greater attendance at exchanges which supplied them. However, in the past three months a third of the injectors had experienced 'citric burns' (painful irritation of the vein or surrounding tissue) while using the sachets, but most said this was no more common than with other acidifiers. A third had run out of sachets before their next exchange visit, presumably because they had used them with equipment not supplied by the exchange, an indication that exchanges should consider handing out more syringes.

¹ Garden J. *et al.* [Evaluation of the provision of single use citric acid sachets to injecting drug users](#). Scottish Executive, Effective Interventions Unit, 2003.