

Giving a Pre-Filled Subcutaneous Injection

What is a subcutaneous injection?

A **subcutaneous injection** is a shot given into the layer of fat between the skin and muscle. Subcutaneous injections are used to give small amounts of medicine.

These instructions will teach you how to give a subcutaneous injection with a pre-filled syringe of medication. Your nurse will show you how to use your pre-filled syringe.

Step 1: Prepare the injection materials

Set up your space

- Find a comfortable, well-lit place to do your injection. If you have an injection once a day, plan to do it at the same time each day.
- Prepare a clean area where you can lay out all of your materials. **We do not recommend using the bathroom or the kitchen.**

Gather your materials

- Pre-filled syringe of medication
- Alcohol prep pads or rubbing alcohol and cotton balls
- Bandage (Band-Aid®)
- Gauze or cotton balls
- **Sharps container** or other puncture-resistant container (made of hard plastic and designed to safely store and dispose of sharp objects like used syringes)

Prepare your medication

- Some medications are kept refrigerated. If you need to inject the medication at room temperature, remove the pre-filled syringe from the refrigerator 30 minutes before you give the injection.
- **Do not shake the syringe.** Shaking it may damage the medication. If it has been shaken, the medication may look foamy and should not be used.
- Make sure that the medication name on the package or syringe label matches what your doctor prescribed for you.
- Make sure that the strength of the medication is what your doctor prescribed. The strength is listed on the package.
- Check the expiration date on the syringe to make sure it has not passed. If the date has passed, dispose of the syringe in the sharps container and do not use it.
- Check to make sure that the medication in the syringe is clear and colorless. **Do not use it if it looks discolored or cloudy, or if it has crystals in it.**

Step 2: Wash your hands

Wash your hands before giving any injection. You can wash your hands with soap and water or a hand sanitizer.

Correct hand-washing with soap and water:

1. Wet your hands and wrists under warm or cold running water.
2. Put soap on your hands.
3. Rub the soap between your fingers, under your nails, and over your palms and the backs of your hands and wrists.
4. Scrub your hands with soap for at least 20 seconds.
5. Rinse your hands and wrists well under clean running water.
6. Dry your hands using a clean paper towel or let them air dry.

Correct hand-washing with hand sanitizer (lotions and gels):

When choosing a hand sanitizer, look for a concentration of 60% to 95% ethanol or isopropanol alcohol. **Do not use hand sanitizer to wash your hands if you have just used the toilet, if you can see dirt on your hands, or if it is the first time you've washed your hands that day.**

1. Put the lotion or gel on the palm of one hand (read the label for the correct amount).
2. Rub your hands together.
3. Rub the sanitizer over all parts of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry.

Step 3: Prepare your injection site

Choose an injection site from one of the following areas (Figure 1):

- The outer area of your upper arms
- Your abdomen or belly (avoid a 2-inch-wide area around your belly button)
- The front of your middle thighs
- The upper areas of your buttocks

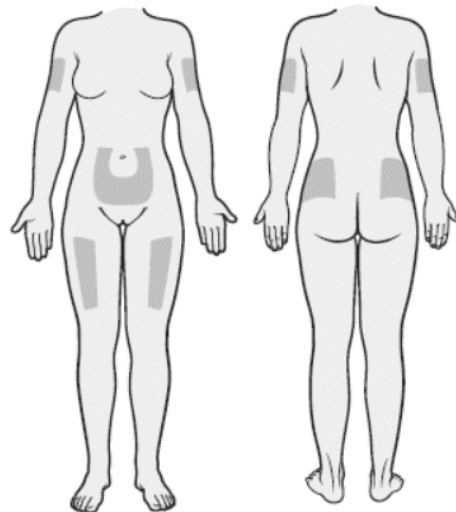


Figure 1: Injection sites

Keep track of which site you used last and change sites. Choosing a new site can help avoid soreness at any one site. Do not inject into an area that is tender, red, bruised, or hard.

Prep the site for injection

- Fold back or remove any clothing that is covering the injection site.
- If you are using an alcohol prep pad, open the packet but don't take the

pad out yet. Put the open packet nearby. You will use this alcohol pad to clean the skin at the injection site just before you give yourself the injection.

- If you are using a cotton ball and rubbing alcohol, get those materials ready and put them nearby.

Step 4: Give the injection

1. Remove the syringe from the package.
2. Clean the skin on the injection site.
Using firm pressure, rub the skin with the alcohol prep pad or a cotton ball with rubbing alcohol for 15 seconds.

Let your skin dry before giving the injection.

3. Hold the syringe around the middle like a pen. Carefully pull the needle cover straight off (Figure 2).

- **Do not let anything, including your fingers, touch the needle.** If anything touches the needle, you must dispose of it immediately in the sharps container. Call your doctor or nurse for instructions on what to do next.

4. Hold the syringe like you would a pen. Use your other hand to pinch a fold of skin at the injection site.

5. Insert the needle into your skin in one quick “dart-like” motion. You can insert the needle straight up and down (90 degrees - see Figure 3) or at a slight angle (45 degrees).

- Keep your muscles around the injection site relaxed.
- Do not change the direction of the needle as it goes in or comes out.

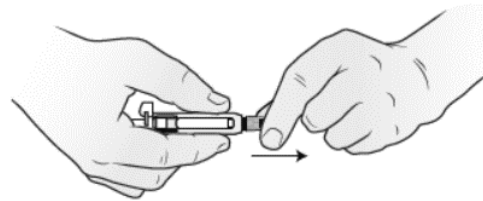


Figure 2: Pulling the needle cover off

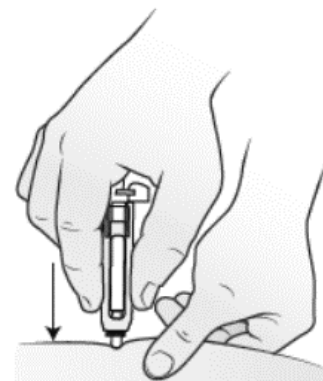


Figure 3: Inserting the needle at 90 degrees

- After the needle is inserted, let go of your skin.
 - Only use a needle once.
6. Use your thumb to slowly push the plunger all the way down (Figure 4). Push it until all the medication is injected.
- Your nurse may teach you to use your index (pointer) finger to push the plunger down instead of your thumb.
7. When the syringe is empty, pull it straight out of your skin. Place a cotton ball or gauze over the injection site and press on it for several seconds. Put a bandage on if needed.
- Do not put the needle cover back on. Be careful not to stick yourself with the needle. Most pre-filled syringes have some kind of needle guard to protect you. Your nurse will explain how to use your specific syringe and needle guard.
8. Put the used syringe and needle cover into the sharps container.

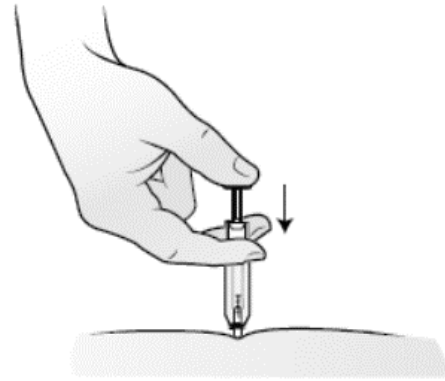


Figure 4: Pushing the plunger

Safety information for syringe disposal

What container should I use to dispose of syringes?

If you cannot get a sharps container, use any empty, hard plastic container with a screw-on cap like a laundry detergent bottle. The container should be clearly labeled **“Used Sharps, Do Not Recycle.”** Always screw the cap on tightly after each use and store it in a safe location, out of reach of children and pets. Do not use glass containers, clear plastic containers, or containers with lids that can easily come off. Do not put sharp objects in any container you plan to recycle or return to a store.

If you receive your medical supplies from a home care provider, they may give you a sharps container with your supplies. If so, place all needles, syringes,

and lancets in this container. Call the company when the container is more than halfway full. Your home care provider will arrange for pick-up of the container. **For your safety, do not bring your container to the Rogel Cancer Center or University of Michigan Hospital for disposal.**

Disposing of your used syringes

Most counties in Michigan have a safe needle disposal program. To find out if your county has a program, go to: bit.ly/MIsharpscollection. This will take you to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment website. There, you'll find a list of counties with safe needle disposal programs, contact names, and phone numbers.

For the counties that don't have a program, you can follow the state guideline, which allows patients to place used needles, pen needles, syringes, and lancets (sharps) in a household container such as an empty laundry detergent bottle, bleach bottle, or other opaque sturdy plastic container with a screw-top lid. When that container is full, you should make sure it is tightly closed and place it in your regular garbage (not recycling).

You may also call the Coalition for Safe Community Needle Disposal at 1-800-643-1643 for information about safe needle disposal programs in your area.

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