

Self-Injection Guide

How to give yourself a subcutaneous injection



This booklet describes how to give yourself a **subcutaneous** (under the skin) injection (needle) for **regular** medication (**not chemotherapy**). Injection is the best way for some medications to get into your body. If you are injecting subcutaneous chemotherapy, please review the booklet **Your Guide to Subcutaneous Chemotherapy Self-Injection**.



The book is divided into 2 parts. Choose the instructions that suit the type of medication you have been prescribed and follow that section.

Table of Contents

Part 1. Using a Pre-filled Syringe..... 1

- A) Gather your supplies 1
- B) Setting up for your self-injection 1
- C) Preparing the injection 3
- D) Choosing and preparing your injection site 4
- E) Injecting the dose 5

Part 2. Drawing Medication from a Vial..... 7

- A) Gather your supplies 7
- B) Setting up for your self-injection 7
- C) Preparing the dose..... 8
- D) Selecting and preparing the injection site 11
- E) Injecting the dose 12

Sharps Container Information 13

Questions about treatment?

Call (Monday to Friday, 8:00 am – 4:30 pm)



Part 1. Using a Pre-filled Syringe

A) Gather your supplies

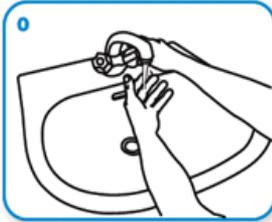
- 1 pre-filled syringe containing your dose of medication
- 1 Needle (if not already attached to your pre-filled syringe)
- Alcohol swabs
- Sharps container
- Gauze
- Paper towel

B) Setting up for your self-injection

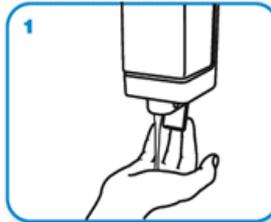
1. If your medication is stored in the refrigerator, take a dose out 20 to 30 minutes before your injection so it can warm to room temperature. Try to give yourself an injection at the same time each day.
2. Find a comfortable, clean and well-lit working area. Try to find a place that doesn't have carpet on the floor, in case the medication spills.
3. If the syringe is leaking, leave it in the package. Call the dispensing pharmacy (where you got the medication) for instructions. The phone number will be on the syringe label.
4. Clean your work area with soap and water or a disinfecting wipe. Lay out a clean paper towel to use as a surface to work on.
5. Wash your hands with soap and water (follow the instructions on the next page).



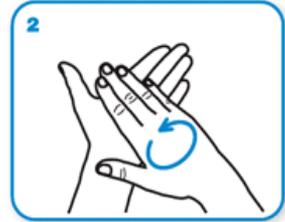
Using a Pre-filled Syringe



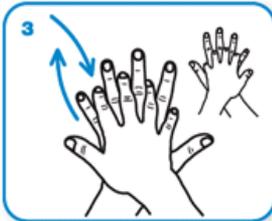
Wet hands with water



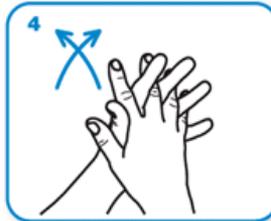
apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces.



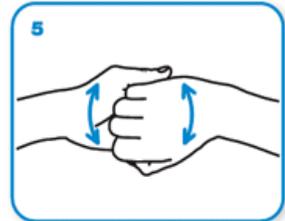
Rub hands palm to palm



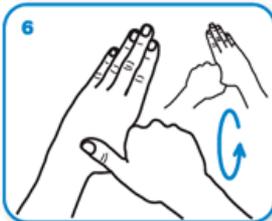
right palm over top of left hand with interlaced fingers and vice versa



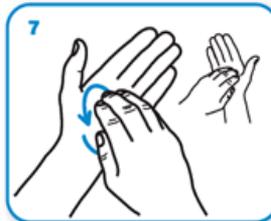
palm to palm with fingers interlaced



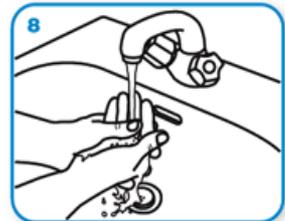
backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked



rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa



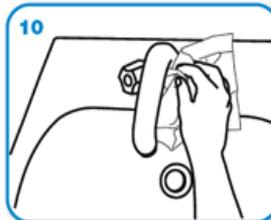
rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa.



Rinse hands with water



dry thoroughly with a single use towel



use towel to turn off faucet



...and your hands are safe.

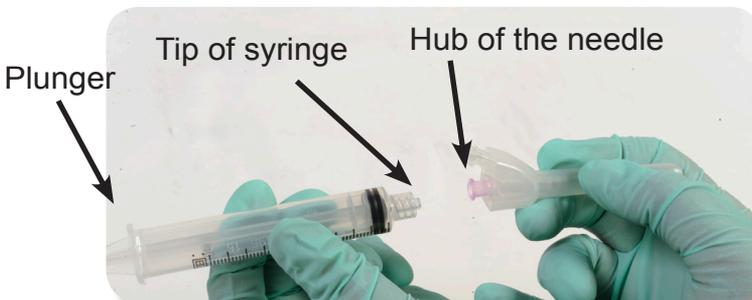
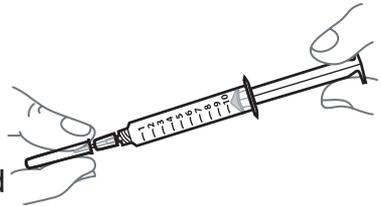
C) Preparing the injection

6. Take syringe out of the bag and put the bag to the side. Put the syringe on your paper towel. **If your pre-filled syringe has a needle already attached, proceed to Section D** (next page).
7. If your pre-filled syringe does not already have a needle attached, take one needle package and open it. To keep it clean, **leave the needle in the package** and put the package down on your paper towel.

8. Remove the cap from the tip of the syringe. To do this, twist to the left. Set the cap on the paper towel.



9. Attach the hub of the needle to the tip of the syringe by twisting to the right to put it on. Once the needle is on tightly, **leave the cap on** and pull off the packaging. Set the packaging aside and put the syringe on the paper towel. **Do not try to push the air out of the syringe** (you may lose medication and then will not get your correct dose).





If anything touches the tip of the syringe:

It is dirty and you should not use it.

- Get a new syringe, and start again (page 1, step 1). Remember to wait 20 to 30 minutes for the syringe to warm to room temperature.
- Call your dispensing pharmacy as soon as possible to get instructions for what to do with it or to get another dose.



If anything touches the hub of the needle:

It is dirty and you should not use it.

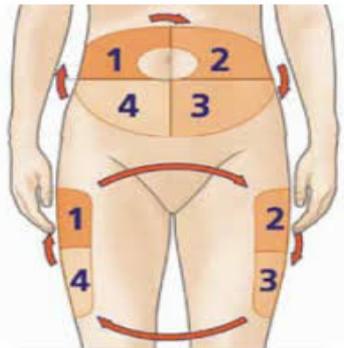
- Put it in the sharps container. Get a new needle, and go to page 3, step 7.

D) Choosing and preparing your injection site

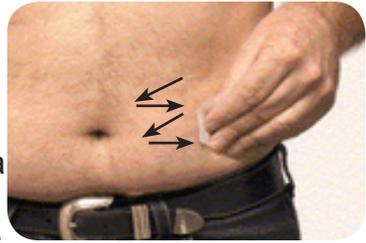
10. Choose the site for injection that you talked about with your health care team (thigh or abdomen).

Avoid areas that are:

- bruised
- hard
- tender or red
- scarred or have stretch marks
- in the belly button area



11. Clean the injection site with an alcohol swab. Use a zigzag motion starting at the site and moving out to a 10 cm (4 inch) area. Let the area air dry. Do not let anything touch the area after you have cleaned it.



<http://www.nps.org.au/>

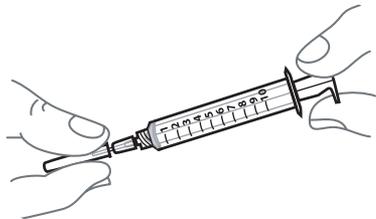


Try to use a different area every time you inject.

This helps the medicine absorb better and causes less damage.

E) Injecting the dose

12. Take the cap off the needle. Your nurse or pharmacist will show you how to do this safely. Hold the syringe in the hand you will use to inject yourself.



13. Use the other hand to pinch a wide fold of skin in the area you cleaned with alcohol.



<http://www.nps.org.au/>

14. Hold the syringe the way you would a pencil or a dart and insert the needle straight (90 degree angle) into the area you are injecting.



<http://www.nps.org.au/>

15. Make sure the air bubble you see in the syringe moves to the plunger end of syringe. Your nurse will show you how to do this. **Remember, do not try to push the air out of the syringe at this point** (you may lose medication and then will not get your correct dose).
16. After the entire needle is in, let go of the skin.
17. Slowly push down on the plunger all the way until the medication is out of the syringe (including the air that was at the end of the syringe).
18. Pull the needle out of the skin and put a piece of gauze on the injection site. Apply pressure for 5 to 10 minutes. **Do not** rub the site.
19. **Do not** replace the cap on the needle. Put the safety cover on the needle just as your nurse showed you.
20. Throw the syringe and all of the other supplies into your sharps container.



Part 2. Drawing Medication from a Vial

A) Gather your supplies

- Vial of medication
- Syringes
- Needles
- Alcohol swabs
- Sharps container
- Gauze
- Paper towel

B) Setting up for your self-injection

Find a comfortable, well-lit working area and self-inject at the same time each day.

1. Check the vial of medication.

Avoid using if it:

- is cloudy (should be clear)
- has particles floating in it
- has expired
- is coloured



Call the dispensing pharmacy (where you got the medication) for a new vial, if needed.

2. Clean your work area with soap and water or a disinfecting wipe. Lay out a clean paper towel to use as a surface to work on.

3. Set out supplies. Make sure the syringe packaging is not broken. If it is, throw out the whole package into the sharps container and get a new package.
4. Wash your hands with soap and water (see page 2).

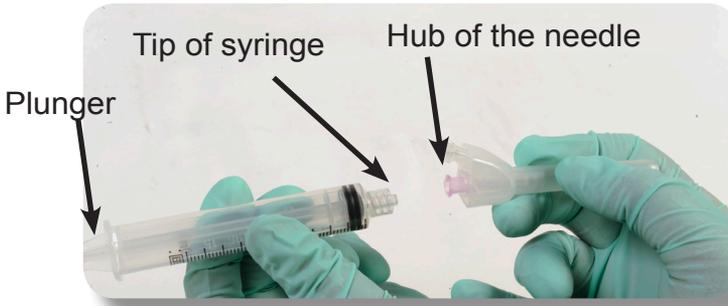


C) Preparing the dose

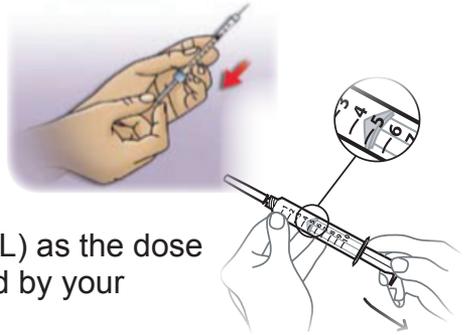
5. Remove the plastic cap from the vial. **DO NOT** remove the rubber stopper. You will insert the needle into this in Step 13.
6. Clean the rubber stopper with a fresh alcohol swab and let it air dry. Throw away the swab.
7. Open the syringe packaging and throw away the package.
8. Take one needle package and open it. To keep it clean, **leave the needle in the package** and put the package down on your paper towel.
9. Remove the cap from the tip of the syringe. To do this, twist to the left. Set the cap on the paper towel.



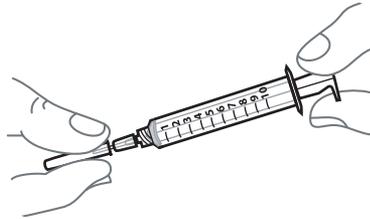
10. Attach the hub of the needle to the tip of the syringe by twisting to the right to put it on. Once the needle is on tightly, **leave the cap on** and pull off the packaging. Set the packaging aside and put the syringe on the paper towel. .



11. Keep the cover on the needle. Pull back the plunger and draw air into the syringe. The amount of air drawn into the syringe should be the same amount (mL) as the dose of medication prescribed by your doctor.



12. Pull the needle cover straight off.



13. While keeping the vial on a flat surface, put the needle straight through the rubber stopper.



14. Push the plunger of the syringe down and inject the air into the vial.

15. Leave the needle in the vial. Turn the vial upside down making sure that the tip of the needle is in the liquid medication.

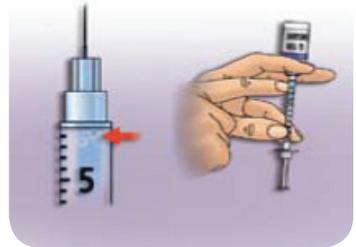
16. **Slowly** pull down on the plunger and let the medication enter the syringe, filling up to the dose prescribed by your doctor.



17. Before you take the syringe out of the vial, check the syringe for large air bubbles and try to remove them. Air bubbles are harmless but can lower the dose you should be receiving, so to get the correct dose, large bubbles should be removed.

To remove air bubbles:

- Gently tap the syringe until the bubbles float to the top of the syringe barrel.
- Gently push the plunger up, forcing the air out of the syringe.
- Keep the tip of the needle in the liquid and pull the plunger back to the number that correctly matches the amount of your dose.
- Check again for large air bubbles and repeat the procedure if necessary. Very small air bubbles are safe to inject.



18. Double check for your correct dose. If correct, carefully replace needle cap, or leave the needle cap on the paper towel and gently slide the needle to lay inside the needle cap. If not correct, return to page 9, step 13.



If anything touches the tip of the syringe:

It is dirty and you should not use it.

- Put it in the chemotherapy sharps container.
- Get a new syringe, and go to page 8, step 7.



If anything touches the hub of the needle:

It is dirty and you should not use it.

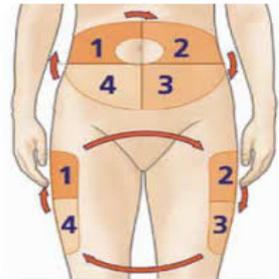
- Put it in the sharps container. Get a new needle, and go to page 8, step 8.

D) Selecting and preparing the injection site

19. Choose the site for injection that you talked about with your health care team (thigh or abdomen).

Avoid areas that are:

- bruised
- hard
- tender or red
- scarred or have stretch marks
- in the belly button area



20. Clean the injection site with an alcohol swab. Use a zigzag motion starting at the site and moving out to a 10 cm (4 inch) area. Let the area air dry. Do not let anything touch the area after you have cleaned it.



Try to use a different area every time you inject.

This helps the medicine absorb better and causes less damage.

E) Injecting the dose

21. Take the cap off the needle. Your nurse will show you how to do this safely. Hold the syringe in the hand you will use to inject yourself.

22. Use the other hand to pinch a wide fold of skin in the area you cleaned with alcohol.



<http://www.nps.org.au/>

23. Hold the syringe the way you would a pencil or a dart and insert the needle straight (90 degree angle) into the area you are injecting.

24. After the entire needle is in, let go of the skin.



<http://www.nps.org.au/>

25. Slowly push down on the plunger all the way until the syringe is empty.

26. Pull the needle out of the skin and put a piece of gauze on the injection site. Apply pressure for 5 to 10 minutes. **Do not** rub the site.

27. **Do not** replace the cap on the needle. Put the safety cover on the needle just as your nurse showed you.

28. Throw the syringe and all of the other supplies into your sharps container.

Sharps Container Information

When should I dispose of my sharps container?

Whenever the container is 2/3 full. Contact the dispensing pharmacy or nurses at your CancerControl treatment centre for another kit.

Where do I bring my sharps container?

You can return the container to your dispensing pharmacy or CancerControl pharmacy. Make sure that it is closed tightly.

I am done but I have pre-filled syringes that I didn't use. What do I do with them?

Return syringes you did not use to the dispensing pharmacy. **Do not** put the unused syringes into the sharps container.



**Find other Alberta cancer care resources
at your cancer centre and online:**

www.cancercontrolalberta.ca

This book is meant to support the information your health care team gives you. It does not replace any information that your health care team gives you.

© Alberta Health Services

CancerControl Alberta

Leading care through compassion, courage, learning and discovery

