

# Injection Guide



The information in this booklet has been adapted with permission from a handbook created by Fenway Health and Planned Parenthood of the Southern Finger Lakes. Fenwayhealth.org

The instructions are based on information created and provided by the the University of Michigan.

That original document is available here:

<http://med.umich.edu/1libr/spinalCordInjuryP-rogram/IMselfInjectionTesto.pdf>



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Safety & Syringe Exchange Programs	2
Tips for Reducing Injection Pain	4
Instructions for Disposing of Sharps	5
How to Give Yourself an Intramuscular (IM) Hormone Injection	6
What is Intramuscular Injection?	
Setting Up for the Injection	
Preparing the Dose	
Selecting & Preparing the Injection Site	
Giving the Injection	
How to Give Yourself a Subcutaneous (SubQ) Hormone Injection	14
What is a Subcutaneous Injection?	
Setting Up for the Injection	
Preparing the Dose	
Selecting & Preparing the Injection Site	
Giving the Injection	

# NEVER REUSE OR SHARE SYRINGES OR NEEDLES

If you need needles or syringes and cannot afford to get them from your healthcare provider or pharmacy, please visit a local needle exchange.

## SYRINGE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Prevention Point Philadelphia offers a syringe exchange program as a way for people to safely dispose of used syringes and to obtain sterile syringes at no cost. Intravenous drug users can bring used syringes to Prevention Point and staff will provide them with new clean, sterile syringes. See their website, [ppponline.org](http://ppponline.org), for the schedule and locations.

Prevention Point also offer comprehensive risk reduction services and harm reduction kits.

## SYRINGE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

City of Philadelphia and surrounding areas: Prevention  
Point Philadelphia  
Syringe Exchange Program  
267-324-6737 for schedule and locations  
[ppponline.org](http://ppponline.org)

### Pharmacy Syringe Access

You can buy needles and syringes at Pennsylvania pharmacies without a prescription. Contact your local pharmacy for pricing and availability or contact our Gender Affirming Care team for suggestions for online sources of injection supplies.

### **\*\*Disposal of Needles and Syringes\*\***

You must dispose of needles and syringes in a hard plastic container. You can get a “sharps” container from a pharmacy or online. You can also use a rigid plastic container, like a laundry detergent bottle. Tape up the lid when it is full and put it in the regular trash.

# TIPS FOR REDUCING INJECTION PAIN

- Never reuse needles
- Use separate drawing up (draws fluid out of bottles or ampoules) and injecting needles
- Let the skin dry fully from the alcohol wipe before beginning the injection
- Keep the muscles in the injection area warm and relaxed
- Inject medicine that is at room temperature
- Break through the skin quickly with the needle
- Insert the needle straight into the skin, and pull it straight out again without changing direction or wiggling the syringe.

# INSTRUCTIONS FOR DISPOSING OF “SHARPS”



Used sharps, such as needles, syringes, and other sharp medical tools, are dangerous to people and pets. By safely disposing of your sharps, you can keep others from getting hurt and prevent the spread of disease.

In Pennsylvania, it is illegal to dispose of sharps in standard household waste. Instead, place them in a sealable, puncture-resistant container. You can purchase a home sharps container from most pharmacies or get free containers from Prevention Point Philadelphia ([ppponline.org](http://ppponline.org)).

Alternatively, you can use a thick plastic container, such as a liquid-detergent bottle, sealed with tape.

Disposal sites will not accept loose needles or sharps in bags or glass containers.

To find an approved disposal location, visit:  
[www.phila.gov/documents/safe-sharps-disposal](http://www.phila.gov/documents/safe-sharps-disposal)

# IM

---

HOW TO GIVE YOURSELF  
A HORMONE INJECTION  
INTRAMUSCULAR (IM)

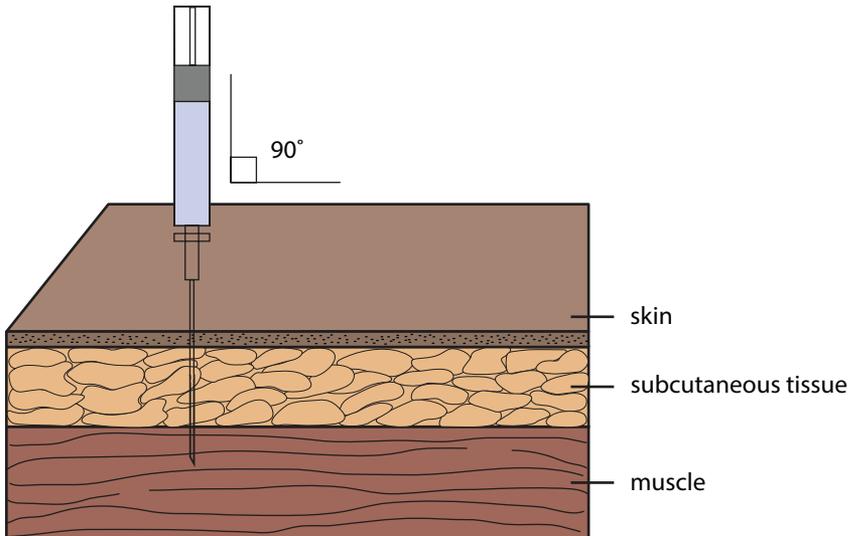
---

# WHAT IS AN INTRAMUSCULAR INJECTION?

An intramuscular injection delivers medication deep into the muscle tissue. This allows the medication to be quickly absorbed into the bloodstream.

Intramuscular shots are given at a 90° angle. The needle enters the skin vertically and directly down in a quick, dart-like movement.

Needles for IM injections can be 20-22 Gauge to draw up medication and 25 Gauge to inject.



# 1

## SETTING UP FOR THE INJECTION

Find a comfortable, well-lit working place and inject at the same time of day, each time you do your injection.

Clean your work area & assemble supplies (FIGURE 1):

- Medication in a vial
- Disposable syringe and two needles: one 20-22 G (to draw up medication) and one 25 G injection needle.
- Alcohol swabs, two (one for vial, one for skin)
- Puncture-proof needle/sharps disposal container
- Check the expiration date on the medication vial; do not use a medication that is past the expiration date. Do not use a medication with visible particles or discoloration. (Medication is generally clear or light yellow when fresh and safe to use.)
- Wash your hands. Hand washing is the most important thing you can do to prevent infection.



# 2

## PREPARING THE INJECTION DOSE

If you are unsure what your dose is, STOP and call your healthcare provider's office for help.

- Take the cap off the vial. Clean the rubber stopper with one alcohol swab. (FIGURE 2)
- Check the package containing the syringe. If the package has been opened or damaged, do not use the syringe. Connect a sterile needle to the syringe or tighten needle if it comes packaged with the syringe. When connecting needle to syringe, do not touch the top of the syringe or the hub of needle.
- Pull the 20-22 G needle cover straight off the needle. Then, pull back the plunger and draw air into the syringe. The amount of air drawn into the syringe should be the same amount (mL or cc) as the dose of medication that your healthcare provider prescribed.
- Do not let the needle touch any surfaces.





(FIGURE 3)



(FIGURE 4)

- Hold the vial on your flat working surface and insert the needle straight down through the center of the rubber stopper into the bottle. (FIGURE 3)
- Push the plunger of the syringe down and push the air from the syringe into the vial. (FIGURE 4)
- Keeping the needle in the vial, turn the vial upside down.
- Position the needle so the liquid is covering the tip of the needle. You may need to pull the needle out slightly to make sure the tip is completely covered by the liquid.
- Keeping the vial upside down, slowly pull back on the plunger to fill the syringe with the medication to the number (mL or cc) that matches the dose your healthcare provider ordered (FIGURE 5).



(FIGURE 5)

- Keeping the needle in the vial, check for air bubbles in the syringe. If there are air bubbles, gently tap the syringe with your fingers until the air bubbles rise to the top of the syringe. Then slowly push the plunger up to force the air bubbles out of the syringe without removing the needle from the bottle.
- After air bubbles are gone, pull the plunger back to the number (mL or cc) marking on the syringe that matches your dose.
- Pull the syringe with needle out of the bottle, remove the needle (discarding it into the sharps container), and place a 25 Gauge injection needle securely on the syringe. Remove the protective cap from the injecting needle. Do not press on the plunger while you change needles.
- Check to make sure that you still have the correct dose in the syringe. It is VERY important that you use the exact dose prescribed by your healthcare provider. (FIGURE 6)

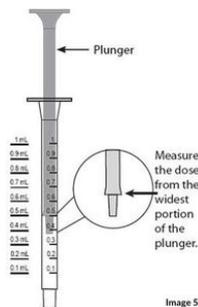


Image 5

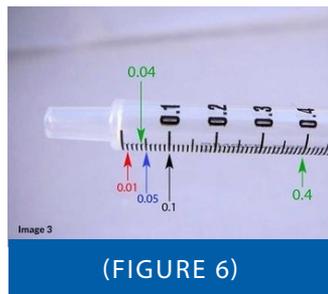


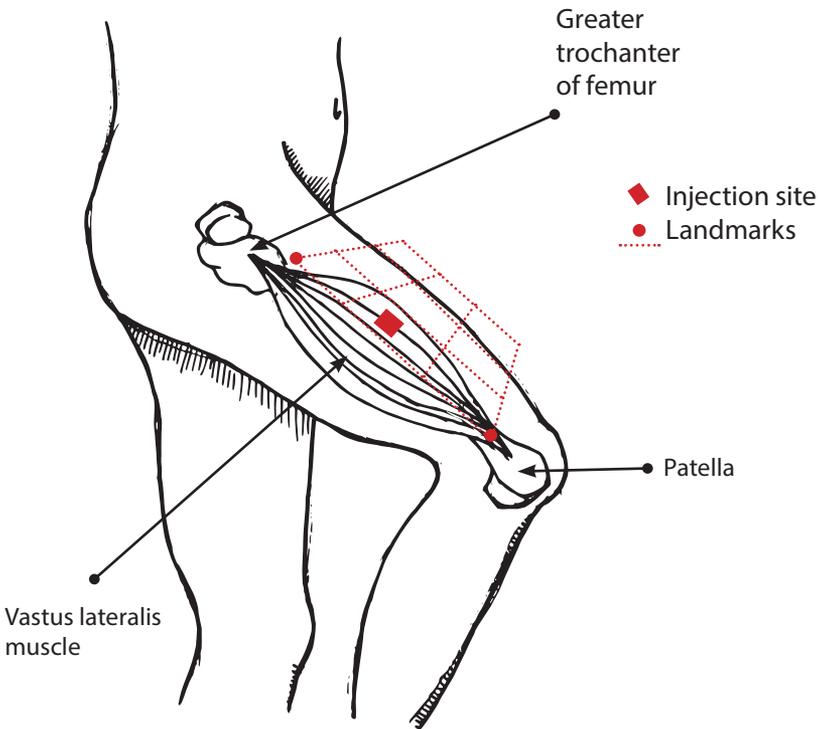
Image 3

(FIGURE 6)

# 3

## SELECTING AND PREPARING THE INJECTION SITE

- Vastus lateralis muscle in the thigh  
The upper thigh is a good site if you are doing self-injection of your medication.
- To find the appropriate location: Look at the top of your thigh, and imagine dividing it into a three-by-three grid.
- The injection will go into the outer middle third.



# 4

## GIVE THE INJECTION

- Clean the injection site skin (FIGURE 7) with a new alcohol swab; let the skin air dry (do not pat or blow on skin to dry it).
- Pull the skin tight around the injection site.



(FIGURE 7)



(FIGURE 8)

- Insert the IM needle into the muscle at a 90° angle with one quick and firm motion (FIGURE 8).
- After inserting the needle into the muscle, keep the skin pulled tight and firmly push the plunger down slowly and completely to finish the injection.
- Apply a bandaid and massage injection site for 10 – 20 seconds.

# SUBQ

---

HOW TO GIVE YOURSELF  
A HORMONE INJECTION  
SUBCUTANEOUS (SUBQ)

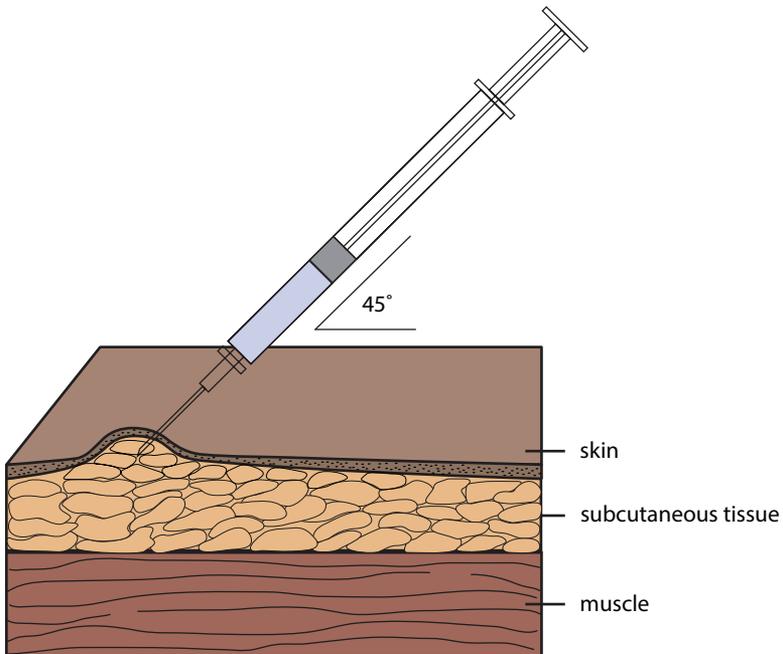
---

# WHAT IS A SUBCUTANEOUS INJECTION?

A subcutaneous injection delivers medication into the subcutaneous layer of tissue that is directly under the skin.

Medication delivered this way is more slowly absorbed into the bloodstream than medication that is directly injected into the muscle.

Needles for SubQ injections are usually 23-25 Gauge and 5/8" (inch) in length. Medication should never be drawn up through these needles. Use a separate drawing up needle.



# 1

## SETTING UP FOR THE INJECTION

Find a comfortable, well-lit working place and inject at the same time of day, each time you do your injection.

Clean your work area & assemble supplies (FIGURE 1):

- Medication in a vial
- Disposable syringe and two needles: one 20-22 G; 1 inch needle (to draw up medication) and one 23-25G 5/8 inch needle (injection needle).
- Alcohol swabs, two (one for vial, one for skin)
- Puncture-proof needle/sharps disposal container
- Check the expiration date on the medication vial. Do not use a medication with visible particles, medication that is discolored, or that is past the expiration date. (Medication is generally clear or light yellow when fresh and safe to use.)
- Wash your hands. Hand washing is the most important thing you can do to prevent infection.



(FIGURE 1)

# 2

## PREPARING THE INJECTION DOSE

If you are unsure what your dose is, STOP and call your healthcare provider's office for help.

- Take the cap off the vial. Clean the rubber stopper with one alcohol swab. (FIGURE 2)
- Check the package containing the syringe. If the package has been opened or damaged, do not use the syringe. Connect a sterile needle to the syringe or tighten needle if it comes packaged with the syringe.
- Pull the 20-22 G needle cover straight off the needle.
- Then, pull back the plunger and draw air into the syringe. The amount of air drawn into the syringe should be the same amount (mL or cc) as the dose of medication that your healthcare provider prescribed.
- Do not let the needle touch any surfaces.



(FIGURE 2)

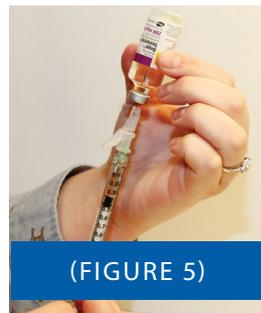


(FIGURE 3)



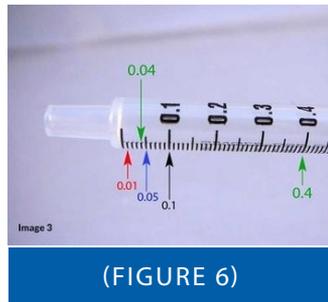
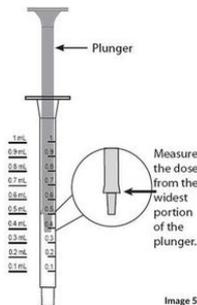
(FIGURE 4)

- Hold the vial on your flat working surface and insert the needle straight down through the center of the rubber stopper into the bottle. (FIGURE 3)
- Push the plunger of the syringe down and push the air from the syringe into the vial. (FIGURE 4)
- Keeping the needle in the vial, turn the vial upside down.
- Position the needle so the liquid is covering the tip of the needle. You may need to pull the needle out slightly to make sure the tip is completely covered by the liquid.
- Keeping the vial upside down, slowly pull back on the plunger to fill the syringe with the medication to the number (mL or cc) that matches the dose your healthcare provider ordered (FIGURE 5).



(FIGURE 5)

- Keeping the needle in the vial, check for air bubbles in the syringe. If there are air bubbles, gently tap the syringe with your fingers until the air bubbles rise to the top of the syringe. Then slowly push the plunger up to force the air bubbles out of the syringe without removing the needle from the bottle.
- After air bubbles are gone, pull the plunger back to the number (mL or cc) marking on the syringe that matches your dose.
- Pull the syringe with needle out of the bottle, remove the needle (discarding it into the sharps container), and place a new 23-25 Gauge SQ injection needle securely on the syringe. Remove the protective cap from the injecting needle. Do not press on the plunger while you change needles.
- Check to make sure that you still have the correct dose in the syringe. It is VERY important that you use the exact dose prescribed by your healthcare provider.(FIGURE 6)



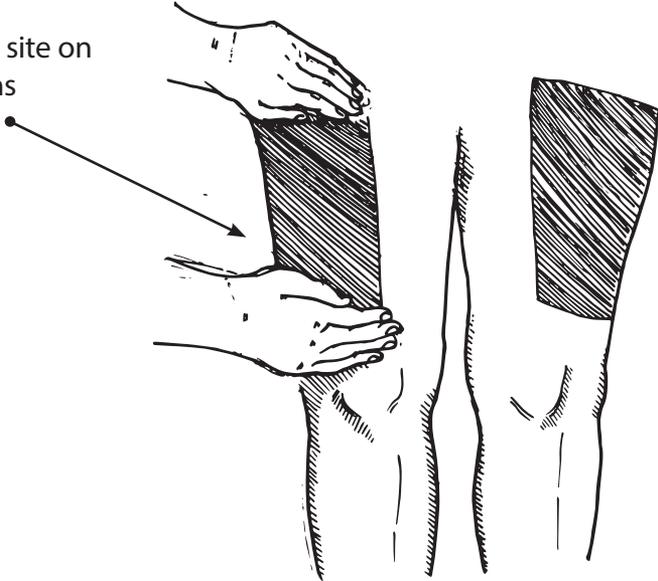
(FIGURE 6)

# 3

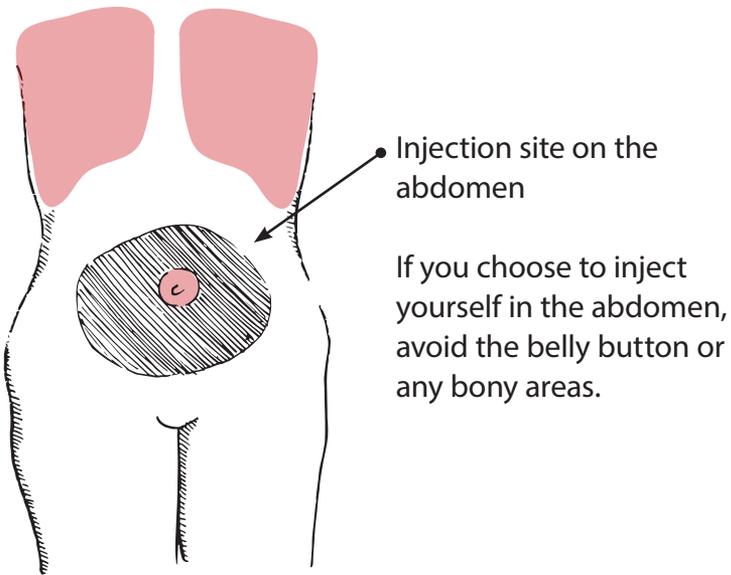
## SELECTING AND PREPARING THE INJECTION SITE

There are a few places you can give yourself a subcutaneous injection, including the fronts of your thighs or your abdomen.

Injection site on the thighs



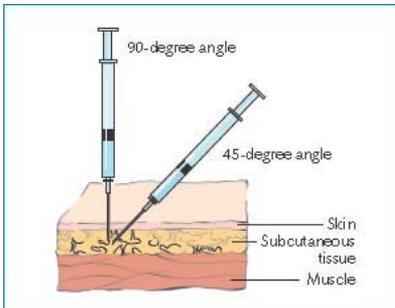
Whichever site you choose to inject, you should be able to firmly grasp and pinch up approximately a 1-inch fold of skin.



# 4

## GIVE THE INJECTION

- Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water and dry them.
- Clean the injection site skin with an alcohol swab; let the skin air dry. Do not pat or rub the skin to dry it.
- Hold the prepared syringe with the hand you will use to give the injection.
- With the other hand, pinch a fold of skin (you will inject into the skin between your fingers).
- With one quick and firm motion, insert the needle directly into the skin fold at a 45-90° angle.



- After inserting the needle under the skin, keep the skin pinched up as you complete the injection by pushing firmly and slowly down completely on the plunger (FIGURE 7).
- Wait 5 seconds, and then pull back on the syringe to remove the needle from your skin. Pull the syringe and needle out at the exact same angle you used to enter the skin. Dispose of the syringe and needle properly, using a sharps container.
- Gently press a sterile piece of gauze on the injection site. Hold pressure on the site until there is no bleeding. You can use a band aid if needed (FIGURE 8).
- Apply a bandaid and massage injection site for 10 – 20 seconds.



(FIGURE 7)



(FIGURE 8)





WE PROVIDE QUALITY,  
COMPASSIONATE CARE  
FROM AN INFORMED  
CONSENT MODEL FOR OUR  
TRANSGENDER PATIENTS.

At Planned Parenthood Southeastern Pennsylvania, we serve transgender people and people at various places on the spectrum of gender identity and expression. We are committed to improving the way transgender people receive health care in our region, and proudly work with our transgender community to lead the way in eliminating barriers to care.

For LGBTQ+ health and wellness information,  
resources, & referrals:

Call: 1-610-687-9410

[PPSP.org](http://PPSP.org)