

# Giving Medicine by Subcutaneous Injection

A subcutaneous injection, also called a sub Q or SQ shot, is one that is given into the layers of skin and fat on top of the muscle.

This handout will show the steps for giving a subcutaneous injection. Injectable medicines often come in prefilled syringes. The last part of the handout will give the steps for filling a syringe if your medicine comes in a bottle and you need to draw it up in the syringe before you can do the injection.

If you are to inject Lovenox or heparin, please refer to the handout, [Giving Lovenox or Heparin by Subcutaneous Injection](#).

## Things to Know

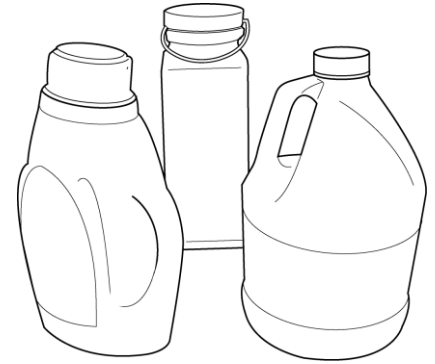
- **If the needle bends or it is bent when you remove the needle cover,** you should not use it for an injection because it may break off in the skin. Do not try to straighten the needle. Start over with a new needle or needle and syringe if needed.
- Store the medicine as you are directed. Some medicines need to be stored in the refrigerator or away from light.
- Be sure to mark the medicine bottle with the date you opened it. Check with your nurse, doctor or pharmacist for how long you can use the medicine bottle after it is opened.

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- Keep your medicine, syringes, needles and old needles and syringes away from children and pets.
- You can buy a needle disposal container at the drug store or you can use an empty heavy plastic bleach or detergent bottle with a lid. Be sure to keep the container out of the reach of children and pets.
- Ask your pharmacist or nurse how you should throw away your container of used needles and syringes. You can also check with your garbage collector.
- **If you are the caregiver** giving a shot, you may want to wear gloves to avoid any contact with blood.

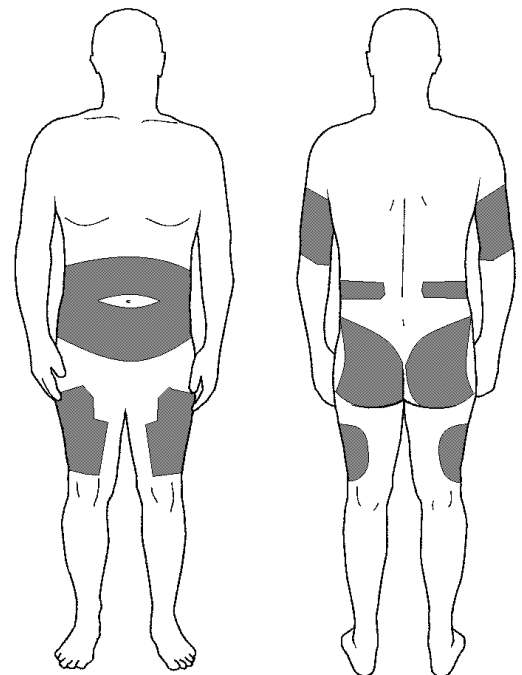


## Select a Site

- For some medicines, you may be told to use only one site. For example, Lovenox is most often given in the abdomen or stomach.
- Use a different spot for each injection in a given area. For example, if you are to take two shots each day, you may give the first one on the left side of your abdomen. Then you use the right side of your abdomen for the second shot.
- Stay 1 inch away from any scar. Stay 2 inches away from the navel if the abdomen is used. Scars will not absorb the medicine.
- Do not use an area that is bruised, swollen or tender.

Decide where you are going to give the injection. Sites that can be used are:

- Outside part of upper arms
- Abdomen or stomach
- Front and side area of upper leg
- Back above waist
- Buttocks

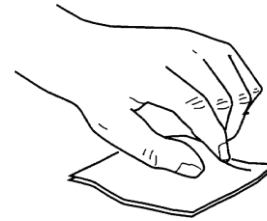


## Giving the Injection

1. Wash your hands well with soap and warm water or use alcohol based hand sanitizer.



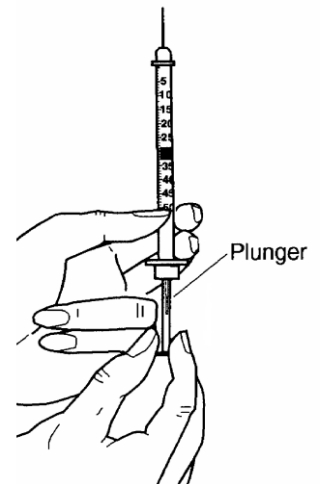
2. Clean your skin site with an alcohol pad. Let the alcohol dry. Do not fan or blow on it to dry it faster because you will add germs back on the skin.



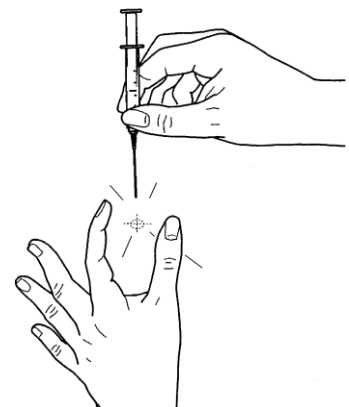
3. Pick up the prefilled syringe and check the label to be sure it is the right medicine. Carefully remove the needle cover.

4. For most medicines, you need to clear air from the syringe. With the needle pointed up, tap the syringe with your finger to move any air bubbles to the top.

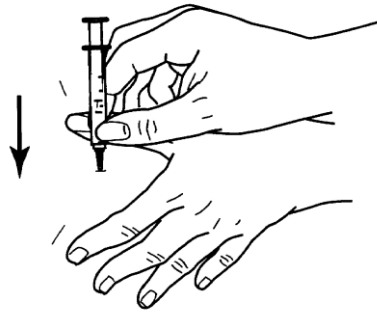
5. Push on the plunger to clear any air out of the syringe, or to adjust the dose to the amount you are to take. The dark line on the end of the plunger should be on the line of the syringe for your dose amount.



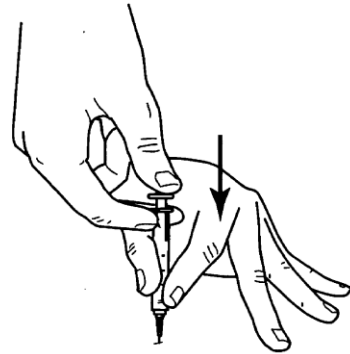
6. Hold the syringe like a dart and gently pinch up the skin at the site.



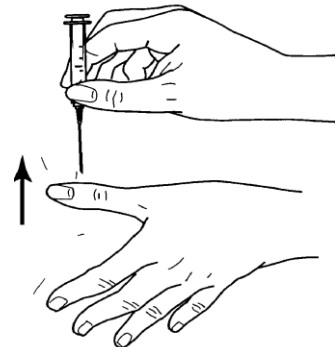
7. With a quick motion, push the needle straight into the skin.



8. If you are thin or you are told to keep the skin pinched, keep the skin pinched up while you inject. Otherwise, let go of the skin and inject the medicine slowly by pushing in the plunger.

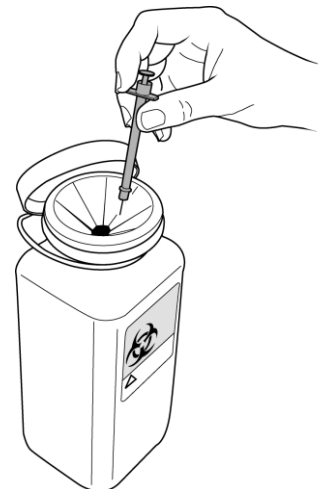


9. Remove the needle and quickly press the alcohol pad or your finger onto the site. **Do not rub the skin.**



10. Hold pressure on the site for a few seconds. If you notice any bleeding or oozing, hold pressure on the site longer.

11. Put the used syringe and needle into a puncture proof container with a lid. Do not recap the needle.



12. Wash your hands well with soap and warm water or use alcohol based hand sanitizer.
13. Mark the date, time and site of your injection on the calendar or record sheet.

### If You Need to Fill the Syringe

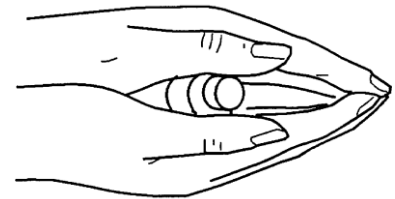
1. Wash your hands well with soap and warm water or use alcohol based hand sanitizer.
2. Get your supplies.
  - ▶ Syringe with needle
  - ▶ Alcohol pad
  - ▶ Bottle of medicine – Check the label to be sure it is the right medicine



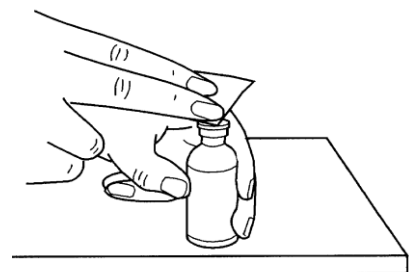
3. Remove the plastic cap from the medicine bottle if it is a new bottle.



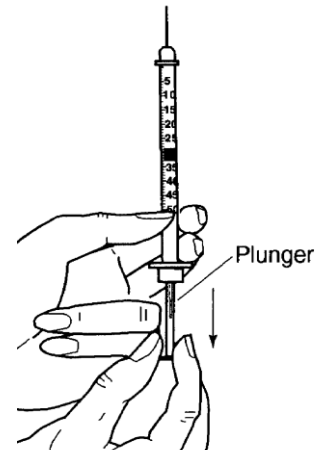
4. Roll the medicine bottle between your hands to mix it. Do not shake it because it could make too many bubbles.



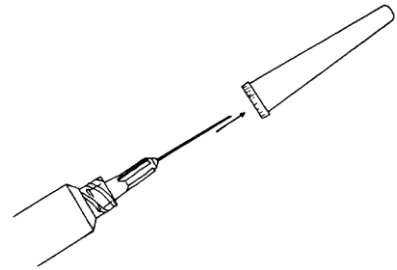
5. Clean the top of the medicine bottle with an alcohol pad.



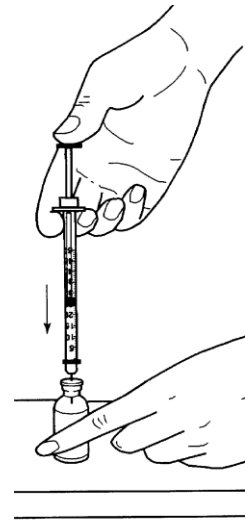
6. Pick up the syringe. Pull back on the plunger and draw air into the syringe equal to the amount of medicine needed.



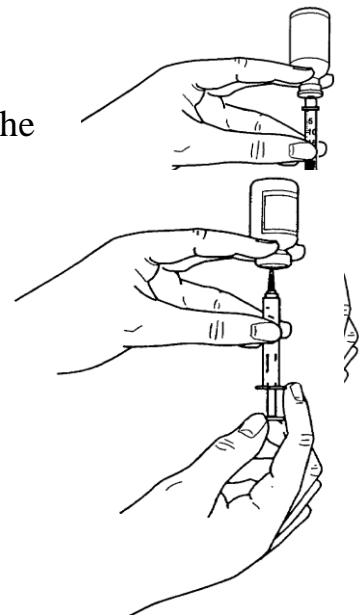
7. Take off the needle cover or cap. Put the needle into the middle of the top of the medicine bottle.



8. Push down on the plunger to inject the air into the bottle. This will make it easier to get the medicine out of the bottle.

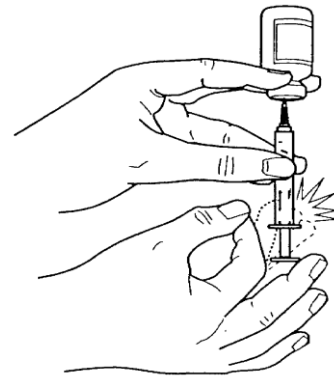


9. With the needle still in the bottle, carefully turn the bottle upside down so the bottle is on top and the syringe is down in your hand. Support the needle so it does not bend.



10. With the needle in the medicine, pull back on the plunger to the amount ordered.

11. Check for any bubbles in the syringe. Tap the barrel of the syringe to move any bubbles toward the needle.



12. Push the plunger to push the air bubbles out of the syringe. Adjust the plunger to draw up more medicine if needed.

13. Remove the needle from the bottle and set the medicine bottle down.

14. The syringe is ready for you to give the injection.

- ▶ If you are not going to give the injection right away, carefully replace the needle cover and set the syringe down.
- ▶ If you are ready to give the injection, go back to the section, **Giving the Injection**, step 6 and proceed.

✦ **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: [health-info@osu.edu](mailto:health-info@osu.edu).**