

Walgreens

A Patient Guide to Properly
Administering Medications
Requiring Self-Injection

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This information is intended to be used as a quick, four-step reference for administering your injectable medication.

Your clinicians at your doctor's office or those associated with the manufacturer of your medications, may offer free, one-on-one injection training. Be sure to ask. Training should include an overview of the skills necessary to carry out your injections at the doctor's office or at your home or office. In case your clinicians do not offer these services, ask them if they can direct you elsewhere. Receiving injection training can help you manage your treatment, especially as you first start giving your injections.

- STEP 1: Set up medication
- STEP 2: Prepare to give injection
- STEP 3: Administer injection
- STEP 4: Dispose of used needles/syringes

These steps are general, self-injection principles that are intended to be utilized as a supplement to:

- *Your injection training with a clinician*
- *Following the directions about your medication's specific storage, preparation and administration provided in the medication guide or package insert*

If you are giving your injection with an injection device, also refer to the medication guide, package insert or website for injection instructions specific to the device.

Step 1: Set Up Medication

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Wash your hands—Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations

It is important to begin by washing your hands thoroughly to prevent infection. A thorough hand washing includes scrubbing the backs of hands, fingertips, thumbs, under the fingernails and between fingers.

When washing hands with soap and water:

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water and apply soap. Use warm water if it is available.
2. Rub hands together to make a lather, and scrub all surfaces.
3. Continue rubbing hands for 15–20 seconds—(the time it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice).
4. Rinse hands with water.
5. Dry hands using a paper towel or air dryer. If possible, use your paper towel to turn off the faucet.



Proper Hand Washing Technique

If hands are not visibly dirty and if soap and clean water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer:

1. Apply product to the palm of one hand.
2. Rub your hands together.
3. Rub the product over all surfaces of your hands and fingers until dry.

Prepare your medication and syringe

1. If your medication is stored in the refrigerator, remove it from the refrigerator about 30 minutes before you plan to inject so it can warm up to room temperature.
2. Put supplies on a clean, dry surface—perhaps a bathroom or kitchen counter or table.
3. It is important that you understand and follow directions for the preparation and administration of your medication contained within the medication guide or package insert.
 - Your medication may be supplied in a prefilled syringe that does not require mixing. Because you are using a prefilled syringe, you may not need to prime the syringe. It is important to check for air bubbles and to see if the level of the medication is at the top of the needle.
 - If you need to prime the syringe to remove all the air from it, hold the syringe pointing upwards, and gently tap the sides to force any air bubbles to the top. Push the plunger slowly until you see one or two drops come out from the tip of the needle. This ensures that all air is out.
 - If your medication preparation requires mixing diluent (liquid) with dry powder, follow the directions as specified in the medication information.
 - For pen devices, refer to the medication guide or package insert or website from the manufacturer for injection instructions specific to the device, as each one is different.

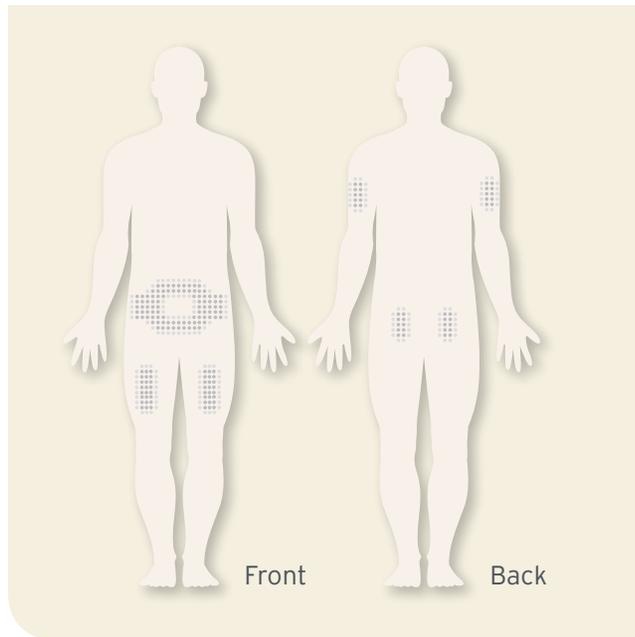
Step 2: Prepare to Give Injection

Step 2: Prepare to Give Injection

Injection Site

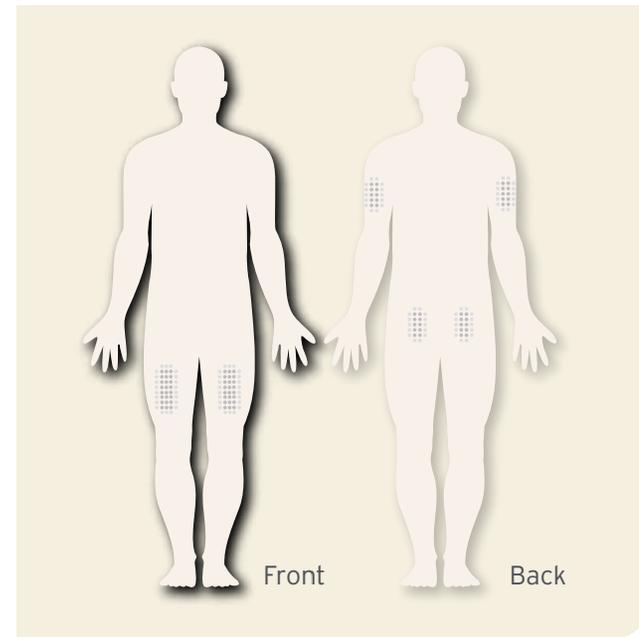
Your doctor will tell you whether your medication is injected into subcutaneous tissue or intramuscular tissue.

- A **subcutaneous injection** involves depositing medication into the fatty tissue directly beneath the skin using a short injection needle. Body sites typically include the upper arm, abdomen or the top of the thigh. See **Body Sites for Subcutaneous Injection** image.



Body Sites for Subcutaneous Injection

- An **intramuscular injection** involves depositing medication into deep, muscle tissue using an injection needle longer than those used for subcutaneous injections. Body sites typically include the mid-thigh or upper, outer quadrant of the buttocks. See **Body Sites for Intramuscular Injection** image.
- Prior to giving the injection, clean the injection site with an alcohol wipe starting at the puncture site, using firm pressure and working your way outward in a circular motion. Let the alcohol dry for a few seconds.
- It is recommended that you alternate body sites each time you give an injection. Keeping a written record is also recommended as it can be helpful in recalling where you injected last.



Body Sites for Intramuscular Injection

Step 3: Administer Injection

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Subcutaneous Injection

1. Remove the needle cover, being careful not to touch the needle. Hold the syringe as you would a pencil.
2. With your free hand, gently pinch the skin at the injection site. You should be pinching one to two inches of skin. See **Example of Subcutaneous Injection** image.
3. Holding the syringe straight up from the injection site, insert the needle using a quick motion. A slow, gentle push will cause more pain.
4. The next step of slowly “pulling back” on the plunger of the syringe to see if blood flows into the syringe—or not to do this—is specific to how you were instructed to give yourself an injection. It is important that you understand and follow your medication’s specific instructions.



Example of Subcutaneous Injection

- A. **If you were NOT instructed to pull back on the plunger, OR if you were instructed to do so and NO blood enters the syringe:**
 1. Slowly inject the medication by gently pushing the plunger until the syringe is empty.
 2. Remove the needle gently but quickly, and apply pressure to the injection site with an alcohol wipe.
 3. Apply a bandage if necessary.
- B. **If you were instructed to pull back on the plunger AND blood entered the syringe (this does not happen often):**
 1. Do NOT give the injection.
 2. Remove the needle from the injection site.
 3. Dispose of the needle and syringe as instructed.
 4. Prepare another injection. Go back and begin instructions at **Step 3. “Administer Injection/Subcutaneous Injection,” No. 1** and proceed, as needed, for blood entering the syringe or not.

Note: Some medication instructions may direct you to replace the needle only and proceed.

Intramuscular Injection

1. Remove the needle cover, being careful not to touch the needle. Hold the syringe as you would a pencil.
2. With your thumb and index finger, stretch the skin of the injection site slightly. Try to relax the muscle you will be injecting; as injecting into tense muscles will be more painful.
3. Holding the syringe straight up from the injection site, insert the needle using a quick motion. A slow, gentle push will cause more pain. See **Example of Intramuscular Injection** image.
4. The next step of slowly “pulling back” on the plunger of the syringe to see if blood flows into the syringe—or not to do this—is specific to how you were instructed to give yourself an injection. It is important that you understand and follow your medication’s specific instructions.



Example of Intramuscular Injection

- A. **If you were NOT instructed to pull back on the plunger, OR if you were instructed to do so and NO blood enters the syringe:**
 1. Slowly inject the medication by gently pushing the plunger until the syringe is empty.
 2. Remove the needle gently but quickly, and apply pressure to the injection site with an alcohol wipe.
 3. Apply a bandage if necessary.
- B. **If you were instructed to pull back on the plunger AND blood entered the syringe (this does not happen often):**
 1. Do NOT give the injection.
 2. Remove the needle from the injection site.
 3. Dispose of the needle and syringe as instructed.
 4. Prepare another injection. Go back and begin instructions at **Step 3. “Administer Injection/Intramuscular Injection,” No. 1** and proceed, as needed, for blood entering the syringe or not.

Note: Some medication instructions may direct you to replace the needle only and proceed.

Step 4: Dispose of Used Needles/Syringes

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Many people use needles/syringes to help administer their medications for various health problems. Safe disposal of needles/syringes is important whether you are at home, work, school or traveling. If you are using needles/syringes, it is your responsibility to make sure that you dispose of them properly in a puncture-resistant sharps container. See **Puncture-Resistant Sharps Container** image.

Some useful tips you can use to help safely dispose of used needles/syringes after administering medication are listed here:

1. Keep the puncture-resistant, sharps container out of the reach of children or animals. Getting stuck with a used needle or coming into contact with a used syringe can be dangerous because they might:
 - Injure people or animals
 - Cause bacterial/viral infections
 - Spread diseases like HIV/AIDS, syphilis, hepatitis and tetanus
 - Bring about emotional trauma (worrying about illnesses after getting stuck)
 - Incur medical expenses (testing for illnesses after getting stuck)
2. When the puncture-resistant sharps container is about two-thirds full, securely tape the lid shut. At your next prescription refill call, request to receive another sharps container. You can also contact Walgreens 24/7 to receive another container.

3. Dispose of all puncture-resistant, sharps containers in designated areas provided by community/national services including:
 - Drop-off collection sites
 - Household “hazardous waste centers”
 - Residential “special waste pickup services”
 - Syringe exchange programs
 - Mail-back services
 - Home needle destruction services
4. Remember to NEVER:
 - Reuse needles or recap needles on a syringe
 - Throw loose needles/syringes in the garbage
 - Flush loose needles/syringes down the toilet
 - Place loose needles/syringes in recycling bins/containers

Instead, immediately put them in a puncture-resistant, sharps container.



Puncture-Resistant Sharps Container

More information about needle/syringe disposal rules in your state, along with the needle/syringe disposal programs near you can be provided by your doctor, local public health department or by contacting the following organizations:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <http://www.cdc.gov/needledisposal/>
- Coalition for Safe Community Needle Disposal: 800-643-1643 or <http://www.safeneedledisposal.org/>
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): <http://www.epa.gov/waste/nonhaz/industrial/medical/med-home.pdf>
- North American Syringe Exchange Program: 253-272-4857 or www.nasen.org

Walgreens is more than your neighborhood pharmacy. We also offer nationwide specialty pharmacy services and support for patients that are taking medications that treat chronic (long-term) conditions. This is done through a dedicated Care Team of pharmacists, nurses and care coordinators who understand your specialty medications and how to take them, We can help you stay on track with your therapy, deliver your medications on time, coordinate your refills and bring you piece of mind. For more information call 888-782-8443 or visit WalgreensHealth.com.

Sources

The following sources were used in the development of this booklet.

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