

Subcutaneous (SQ) Injection

A **Subcutaneous Injection** places medication into the soft fatty tissue directly beneath the skin's surface. This area does not require long needles. Most SQ injections use short, fine needles because the medication only needs to reach the upper fat layer, not the muscle.

Preparation

- Start by washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water to ensure your hands are clean.

Supplies you'll need:

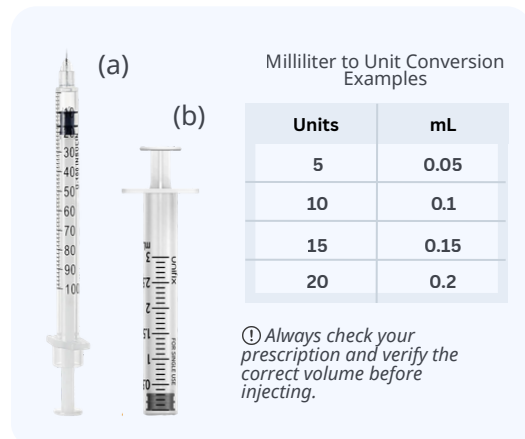
- Medication vial
- Syringe and needle
- Alcohol wipes
- Sharps container (or a strong plastic bottle)

Know Your Needle and Syringe

- Subcutaneous injections use an insulin syringe, marked in units for accurate dosing.
- The needle is thin and short.

Insulin Syringe (a) commonly hold 1 mL (100 units). They include clear unit markings and are designed for small, accurate doses.

Luer-Lock Syringe (b) can also be 1 mL or 3 mL capacity, these syringes are marked in milliliters and allow needle tips to securely twist on.



(a) (b)

Units	mL
5	0.05
10	0.1
15	0.15
20	0.2

⚠ Always check your prescription and verify the correct volume before injecting.

Subcutaneous injection sites

- Back of Upper Arm
- Abdomen
- Front of Thigh

Areas to avoid

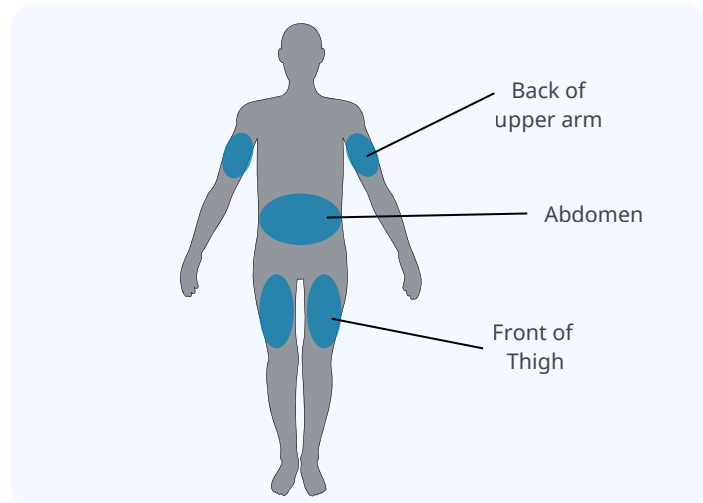
Do not inject into areas that are:

- Red, swollen, or painful
- Bruised or scarred
- Hard or lumpy
- Irritated or infected

⚠ Rotate injection sites to help prevent skin irritation and tissue changes.

Subcutaneous Injection Sites

- On the **back of the upper arm**, halfway between the shoulder and elbow
- On the **abdomen** at least 2 inches away from the belly button,
- On the **front outer thigh** midway between the hip and knee to ensure the medication is injected into the fatty layer.



Step by step when drawing your medication

Prepare the injection site

Once hands are clean:

- Choose an injection site to prepare: **back of upper arm, abdomen, or front thigh**
- Clean the skin with an alcohol wipe
- Allow the area to air dry completely

Disinfect the Medication Vial

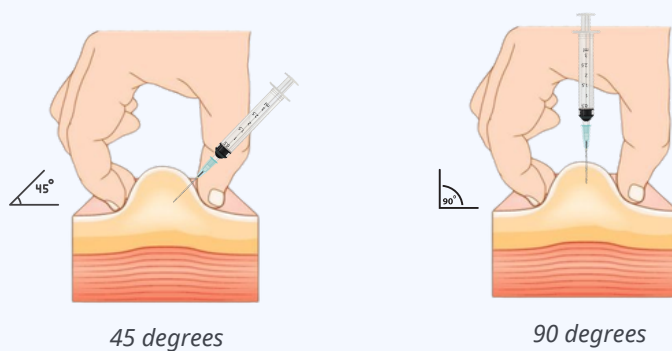
- To disinfect the vial: remove the seal on the top of the vial and disinfect with the alcohol wipes by swiping once.

Giving the injection

- **Hold, uncap and pull:** Pull the needle cap straight off. Position to hold the syringe like a pencil with the needle pointing up. Pull the plunger back to draw air into the syringe. The amount of air should be equal to your prescribed dose of medication.
- **Insert, flip:** Proceed to carefully push the needle straight into the center of the vial's rubber stopper. Make sure the needle does not bend. With the needle still inside the vial, turn the vial and syringe upside down. Push the air into the vial (the air goes into the vial to make sure its easier to draw the medicine out). Slowly pull the plunger back past the prescribed medication dose. Then, push the excess back into the vial until you reach the mark of the prescribed dose
- **Pinch and Inject:** With the hand not holding the syringe, pinch your skin a 2-inch fold of skin between your thumb and index finger. Insert the needle at a 45 or 90 degree angle into the pinched-up skin. The needle should be completely covered by skin.



Giving the injection (Illustration)



- **45° angle:** if you have less fatty tissue or were instructed to do so
- **90° angle:** if you can pinch enough tissue

ⓘ If you are unsure which angle to use, contact your provider or pharmacy.

45 degrees

90 degrees

After the injection

Withdraw & Dispose:

- Keep the needle in place until the medication is fully delivered
- Remove the needle from the skin
- Dispose of the needle and syringe into a sharps container
- Apply gentle pressure with clean gauze or cotton ball if there is mild bleeding
- Do not rub the injection site

ⓘ Use a proper sharps container made of **puncture-resistant plastic**. If you don't have one, you may use a thick detergent bottle with a screw cap as an alternative. Make sure the container cannot be punctured by the needles and syringes, stays sealed when closed and is kept out of reach of children and pets.

ⓘ Use a new injection site each time. Never reuse needles or syringes.

After the injection: what's normal and when to get help

What is normal after an injection

It is normal to have:

- Mild soreness or tenderness
- Slight redness at the injection site
- A small amount of bleeding or bruising

These symptoms should improve over the next few hours to days.

Manage mild symptoms

- Apply gentle pressure for bleeding
 - Use a clean bandage if needed
 - Soreness may be helped with light movement
- ⓘ Do not rub or massage the injection site.

Monitor the injection site

Check the injection site over the next 24–48 hours for changes.

Mild redness is common. Symptoms should not worsen over time.

Pause or STOP if this happens

Stop the injection or do not continue if you notice:

- Significant or worsening pain
- Resistance while injecting
- Needle movement or slippage
- Uncertainty about what to do next

It is always safer to pause than to continue if something feels wrong.

If the injection was interrupted or incomplete

This includes situations where:

- The needle came out early
- Medication leaked from the site
- The full dose was not delivered

Do not attempt to re-inject unless instructed. Contact your healthcare provider or pharmacy for guidance.

When to contact your provider or pharmacy

Contact your provider if you notice:

- Increasing redness, warmth, swelling, or pain
- Drainage or signs of infection
- Unexpected reactions

OR contact your provider if you are unsure about your dosing or injection technique

When to seek urgent medical care

Get urgent help for:

- Severe pain or swelling
- Signs of an allergic reaction (trouble breathing, swelling of face or throat)
- Bleeding that does not stop

When to call 911:



- Sudden onset hives, wheezing, shortness of breath, throat closing
- Signs of severe allergic reaction (also known as anaphylaxis)

Final Reminders



- Never reuse needles or syringes
- Never share medication or supplies
- Dispose of used supplies in a resealable puncture-proof container
- Store supplies safely and out of reach of children and pets
- **Make sure to rotate sites to avoid scarring and infection**

⚠️ If you have questions at any point, contact your healthcare provider or pharmacy.