

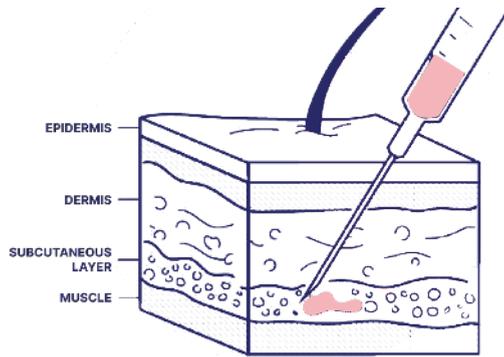
# SUBCUTANEOUS (SUBQ) INJECTION GUIDE



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## WHAT IS A SUBCUTANEOUS (SUBQ) INJECTION?

Subcutaneous injection is a way to inject medication into the fatty tissue under the skin. A subcutaneous injection is given at a 45° angle. Less commonly, a 90° angle can be used.



## WHAT SUPPLIES ARE NEEDED FOR A SUBQ INJECTION?

- **Medication vial** (check expiration date and ensure the medication is not cloudy)
- **Disposable syringe:** preferably 1mL in size. You may also use a 3mL syringe.
- **Draw Needle:** a thicker needle to draw up medication into the syringe. Draw needles are usually 18 or 20 gauge in size and 1-2 inches in length.
- **Injection Needle:** a thinner needle used to inject the medication into the fatty tissue. Injection needles are usually 22 to 25 gauge in size and can be up to 5/8<sup>th</sup> inch in length.
- **Alcohol swabs**
- **Cotton ball, gauze, or bandage**
- **Sharps container** (See Step 5)

*Note: The needle size is described in units called gauge numbers. The smaller the needle gauge, the bigger the needle.*

## WHERE DO I GET THE NEEDLES AND SYRINGES FOR A SUBQ INJECTION?

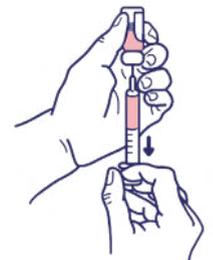
The prescription for your medication will include the recommended needles and syringes to pick up from your local pharmacy. YOU SHOULD NEVER REUSE OR SHARE NEEDLES OR SYRINGES. If you are having trouble getting supplies, please send a message to your KIND advocate via the patient portal.

## STEP 1 - SET UP YOUR INJECTION WORK AREA

1. Find a comfortable, well-lit place to give yourself the injection.
2. Clean your work area and gather the supplies listed above.
3. Check the expiration date on the medication. Do not use the medication if it has visible particles, looks cloudy, or has expired.
4. Wash your hands with soap and warm water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Hand washing is one of the most important things you can do to prevent infection.

## STEP 2 - PREPARE YOUR INJECTION DOSE

1. The first time you use the medication vial, you'll need to remove the plastic or foil dust cap to reveal the rubber stopper underneath. Scrub the rubber stopper vigorously with an alcohol swab for 10-seconds and let it air-dry.
2. Check the packaging of your syringes and needles. If any of the packages have been opened or damaged, dispose of them and use a new one.
3. Attach a draw needle to your syringe. Take care not to touch the base of the needle or the tip of the syringe so that they stay sterile.
4. Draw back the plunger to draw air into the syringe. You want your plunger at the same mark as your medication dose. You will inject the air into the vial before you withdraw the liquid. This step is necessary to maintain the correct pressure inside the vial.

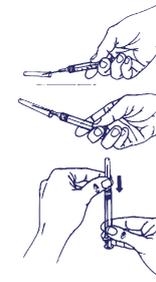


5. With one hand, hold the vial on a flat surface. In your other hand, grasp the syringe like a pencil. Uncap the needle and insert the needle straight down into the center of the rubber stopper of the medication vial. Push down the plunger of the syringe to inject the air into the vial.
6. Keeping the needle in the vial, turn the vial upside down. Do not let go of the vial. Position the needle so the liquid is covering the tip of the needle.
7. Keeping the tip of the needle in the liquid, slowly pull on the plunger to fill the syringe with the correct dose of medication.



8. Leave the needle in the vial and check for air bubbles in the syringe. If there are air bubbles, draw more medication into your syringe. This helps the extra air collect at the top of the syringe. Then, slowly push the plunger back up to your prescribed dose. This forces the air bubbles and extra medication out of your syringe and back into the vial.
9. When no air bubbles remain, ensure that you still have the correct dose of medication in your syringe and withdraw the needle from the vial. There may be a small amount of medication that escapes from the vial as you withdraw your needle. Drug manufacturers account for this leakage.
10. Recap the draw needle carefully and remove it from your syringe. Place the recapped draw needle directly into your sharps container.
11. Attach the injection needle to your syringe of medication. Do not touch the base of the needle that attaches to the syringe. Do not remove the protective cap from the needle until you are ready to inject.

## ONE-HANDED NEEDLE RECAPPING METHOD

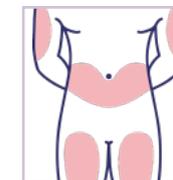


**STEP 1** Place the cap on a flat surface, then remove your hand from the cap.

**STEP 2** With one hand, hold the syringe and use the needle to scoop up the cap.

**STEP 3** When the cap covers the needle completely, use the other hand to secure the cap on the needle hub. Be careful to handle the cap at the bottom only (near the hub).

## STEP 3 - SELECT INJECTION SITE



**There are three appropriate areas of the body to give yourself a subcutaneous injection, see graphic. You should rotate sites each time you inject to reduce discomfort and potential scarring.**

- **Abdomen** – Most common SUBQ injection site. Do not use the one-inch area directly around your belly button.
- **Back or side of the upper arm** – Fatty tissue on the back of the arms between the shoulder and elbow.
- **Outside of the thigh** – Fatty tissue that is easily pinched from the outside of the thigh.

## STEP 4 - ADMINISTER THE INJECTION

1. With a new alcohol swab, scrub the selected injection site for 10 seconds and let it air-dry. Do not touch this site again until you give the injection.
2. Check once more that the correct dose is in the syringe and then remove the cap from the injection needle.
3. With one hand, use your thumb and index finger to pinch up an inch of skin at the selected injection site.
4. Using your other hand, firmly hold the syringe barrel like a pencil and insert the needle at a 45° angle. Discuss with your provider if a 90° angle is right for you. Push the needle through the skin in a smooth, quick, single motion. Make sure to insert the needle all the way into the skin.
5. Once the needle is fully inserted, push down on the plunger to slowly inject the medication. You may feel slight discomfort as the medication enters the tissue. When the plunger is at the bottom, hold the syringe in place for a few seconds to help with absorption, then pull the needle out of the skin.
6. Carefully slide the needle into the cap. Then remove the capped needle and place it into your sharps container.
7. If you experience any bleeding at the injection site, gently press a cotton ball or gauze on the site until bleeding stops. Apply a clean bandage if necessary. You are not losing any of your medication if you are bleeding. Bleeding is not uncommon.



## STEP 5 - DISPOSE OF NEEDLES AND SYRINGES

1. All sharps (needles and syringes) should be disposed of in a sealable, non-see-through, puncture-resistant container.
  - a. You can get a sharps container from most drug stores or your pharmacy.
  - b. You can also use a thick plastic container with a lid, like a laundry detergent bottle, that is clearly labeled "SHARPS" with a permanent marker.
2. When your sharps container is 3/4 full, tape the lid shut with duct tape.
3. After your sharps container is taped and labeled, you can put it in the regular trash. Do not put it in the recycling.
4. If you need more information about how to dispose of your needles and syringes, reach out to your KIND advocate or call 3-1-1 for help in your area.