



A Teaching Affiliate  
of Harvard Medical School

# How to Give a Subcutaneous Injection

The Center for Breast Cancer  
Mass General Cancer Center



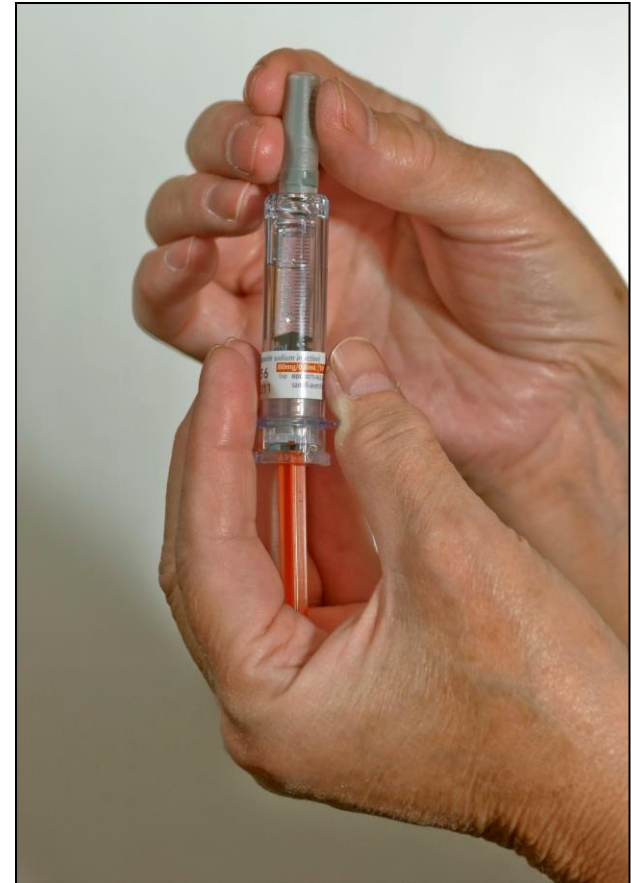
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# What is a subcutaneous injection?

- A subcutaneous injection is a shot given into the fatty tissue just under your skin.
- You can give the injection to yourself, or someone else can do it for you.



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# What you will need

You will need:

- Gauze
- Alcohol pads or cotton balls and rubbing alcohol
- Syringe (syringe is usually already filled with medicine)
- Vial of medicine (if syringe is not pre-filled)
- Puncture proof container with screw cap to contain needles and syringes. If you do not have a “sharps container,” a laundry detergent bottle or coffee cannister will work.

\*Make sure you have these items before you begin your injection.



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# Getting Started

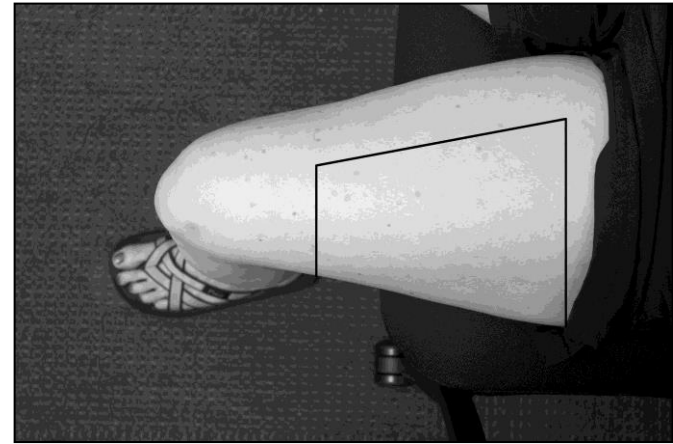
- If your medication is in the refrigerator, take it out approximately 30 minutes before you give yourself the injection.
- Gather your supplies.
- Wash your hands with soap and water.

# Choose an injection site

There are 3 injection sites you can use.

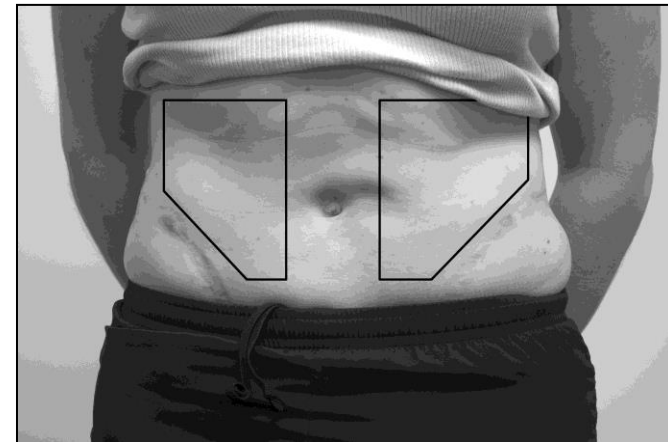
## Thighs

- Use the top and outer part of the thigh.
- Do **NOT** use the inner thigh.



## Belly (Abdomen)

- Stay at least two inches away from the belly button or any scars.
- Injections in the belly sometimes hurt less.



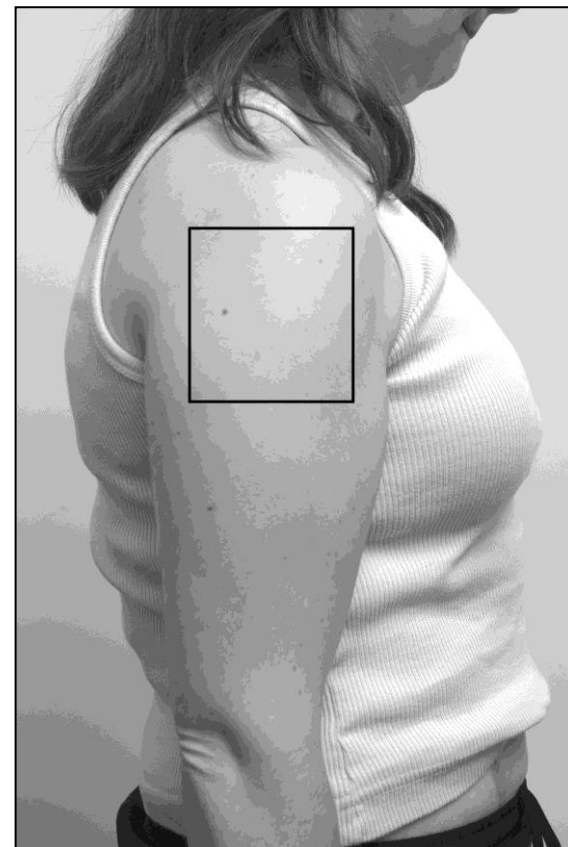
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# Choose an injection site

## Arm

- You will need someone else to give your injection if you choose this site.
- Measure one hand width down from the shoulder and one hand width up from the elbow.
- Use the fleshy outer surface of your arm.



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# Choose an injection site

- It is important to **change injection sites often**.
- Do not give yourself injections in the same place all the time. If you do, it can cause scarring and the medicine will not be absorbed correctly.



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# Clean your skin

1. Clean your skin at the injection site with an alcohol wipe or cotton ball soaked in rubbing alcohol.
2. Use firm pressure and wipe in a circular motion. Start at the center and move outwards.
3. Let your skin dry completely before starting the injection.





# Giving the injection

1. Pick up the syringe and take the cap off the needle. Be careful not to touch the needle or let the needle touch anything. If the needle does touch something, throw it away and start over with a new one.
2. Hold the syringe in one hand like a pencil or a dart.



3. With your other hand, squeeze the skin of the injection site between your thumb and index finger.  
Take a deep breath and relax!



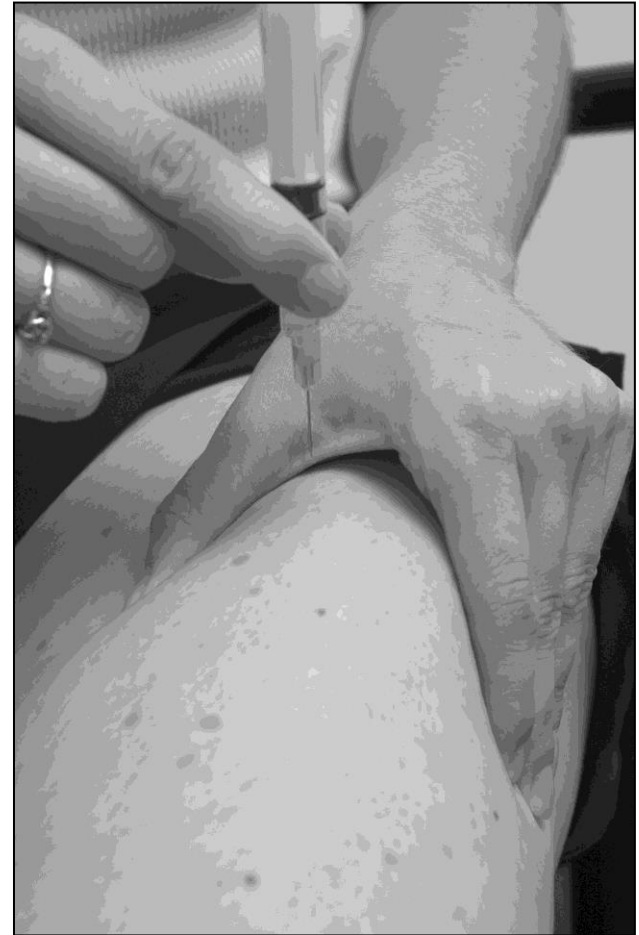
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# Giving the injection

4. Stick the needle into your skin straight up and down using a firm motion.

- Do **not** stick the needle in slowly
- Do **not** use a lot of force.
- Do **not** press down on the syringe plunger while you are still sticking the needle into the skin



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# Giving the injection

5. After the needle is in, relax your grasp on your skin.
6. You can hold the syringe near the base with one hand to keep it stable.
7. Push the plunger down in a slow, steady motion.



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# After the medication is injected

- Put a gauze pad on your skin near the injection site and press down gently on your skin. Quickly pull out the needle and syringe.
- After the needle is removed, press gauze over the injection site.
- Hold pressure over the site for a few seconds. You can use a bandage if needed.
- Do **not** put the cap back on the needle



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# Throw the needle away safely

- Throw away needles and syringes in a safe container like a laundry detergent bottle.
- Make sure the lid is screwed on tightly.
- Keep the container out of reach of children.
- Check with your pharmacy or local board of health to find out how to throw away the full needle container.
- Do **not** recycle the needle container.
- Call your nurse if you have questions.



# Contact Information

- Boston: 617-726-6500
- Waltham: 781-487-6100
- Danvers: 978-882-6060
- Patient Portal: [patientgateway.org](http://patientgateway.org)



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