

# Subcutaneous injections



Oncology/Hematology/BMT Department

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**Your child needs to take a medicine by injection, just under the skin. This is called a subcutaneous or “sub-Q” injection.**

## Prepare your child

First, get your supplies ready. Explain briefly what you are going to do. Be honest about discomfort. Talk about how the medicine will help. When you have explained this, proceed quickly. Waiting can make your child more anxious.

If you do not think your child can stay still, have someone hold them. To help your child cope:

- **Distract your child:** Have your child focus on squeezing someone’s hand, humming, counting or blowing bubbles. Keep your child talking or singing.
- **Relax your child** with music, visualization, or breathing together.
- **Comfort your child.** Give lots of praise when finished.
- **Reassure your child that medicine is not punishment.**

When your child gets older, they may want to do part or all of the injection themselves. Encourage independence, but wait until the child is ready.

## Prepare the medicine

### 1. Clean your hands.

Take off your watch and all rings.

To wash your hands:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for 1 minute.
- Rinse well.
- Dry hands with paper towels or a towel.
- Use a paper towel or towel to turn off the tap.

Or, use an alcohol based hand sanitizer.

### 2. Gather your supplies.

- 2 Chlorhexidine/alcohol swabs
- Cotton ball (if desired)
- Vial of medicine
- \_\_\_ mL syringe with a \_\_\_ inch needle
- Sharps container for needles

#### Sharps safety

When you finish with your needle and syringe, put them into a sharps container.

Your **sharps container** can be:

- A special container for sharps,
- A coffee can with a cover, or
- A plastic detergent bottle with a lid.

You can get a sharps container from your pharmacy. When it is full:

- Seal the container
- Mark it ‘Household sharps’
- Call your garbage collection company, pharmacy, or clinic to know how to safely discard the container. Do not put it in your household garbage.

**Do NOT reuse** needles or syringes.

**Do NOT throw needles right into the garbage.**

### 3. Check your vial.

Check the date. If the medicine has expired, use a new vial.

Check the medicine. If it has changed colour, or has flakes or lumps, discard it. Use a new vial.

### 3. Get the medicine ready.

If the vial is cold, warm it by holding it in your hand. Or, let it stand at room temperature for one hour.



If you need to mix the medicine, roll the vial in your hands. Do not shake the vial.

### 5. Snap off the plastic cover.

If this is the first time you are using the vial, snap off the cover. Do not remove the stopper.

### 6. Scrub the stopper with a chlorhexidine/alcohol swab.

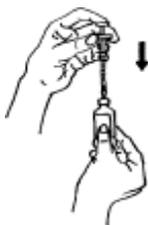
Let it dry.

### 7. Get the syringe ready.

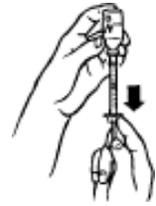
Pull the plunger back to the line that marks the dose you need to give. This will bring air into the syringe.

### 8. Put the correct dose of medicine into the syringe. To do this:

- Carefully remove the needle cover. Do not touch the needle.
- Put the needle through the stopper and push the air into the vial.



- Turn the vial upside down. Pull the needle down so only the tip pokes through the stopper. This will let you withdraw medicine without getting air.



- Pull back on the plunger and let the medicine flow into the syringe until it reaches the amount to be given.

### 9. Check the syringe for air bubbles.

Air bubbles will not hurt your child. But, large air bubbles will reduce the dose your child receives.

To remove air bubbles, keep the syringe needle in the vial, and:

- Gently push the medicine back into the vial. Measure the dose again. Or,
- Tap the syringe to make the bubble rise to the top. Hold your syringe and vial tightly so the needle will not bend. Squirt the bubble into the vial. Measure the dose again.

### 10. Remove the needle from the vial.

If you must put the syringe down, put the needle cover on first. Do not let the needle touch anything.

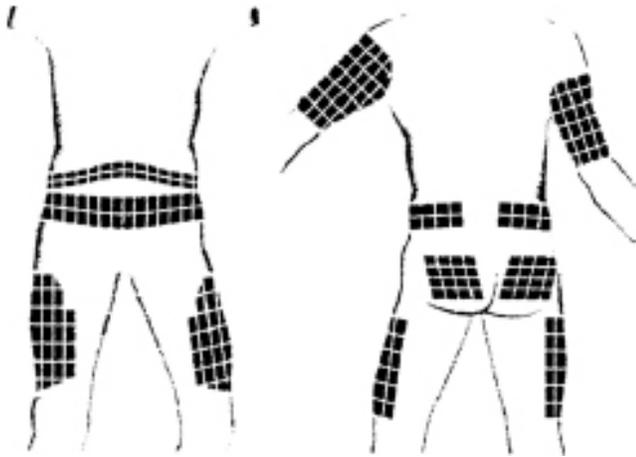
## Give the injection

### 1. Pick a site to give the injection.

If your child gets injections often, pick a different injection site each time.

By switching injection sites, you:

- Give tissue time to heal
- Prevent lumps and scar tissue
- Help the medicine absorb evenly.



Choose from these sites. You do not need to use them all. Use injection sites that are one hand's width away from any joint.

### 2. Have your child lie or sit down.

Remove clothing from the injection site.

### 3. Clean the injection site with a chlorhexidine/alcohol swab.

Move the wipe in a circle for 15-30 seconds. Let the site dry.

### 4. Take off the needle cover.

Hold the syringe like a dart.

### 5. With your other hand, pinch a large area of the skin you cleaned.

### 6. Quickly insert the needle into the pinched skin.

Use the angle checked below. Push the plunger slowly until the syringe is empty.



45 degrees

90 degrees

As your child gets older, the needle angle may change. Ask your child's doctor or nurse about this.

### 7. With the needle in, let go of the pinched-up skin.

Wait a few seconds. This keeps the medicine from leaking out.

### 8. Keep the needle at the same angle, and quickly pull it out.

Gently cover the injection site for 5 seconds with a cotton ball or clean tissue. Do not rub or push the skin.

## Staying safe

- **Most medicines have side effects.** Learn the side effects of your child's medicine, and what to do if they occur.
- **Some medicines can affect the way that other medicine works.** Talk to your doctor or nurse before starting any new medicines, including over the counter medicines and natural medicines.

- **You and your child should know the names and doses of their medicines.** Share this information with anyone that helps with your child's care.
- **Make sure you have enough medicine.** When you refill your prescription, check how many refills are left. If there are no refills left, your pharmacist will have to contact the doctor. This will take 2 or 3 days.
- **Before giving the first dose, read the label.** Make sure it is what the doctor prescribed. If the medicine refill looks different, talk to your pharmacist before you give it to your child.
- **Keep all medicine out of children's reach.** Lock medicine up, if possible. If medicine is outdated, take it to your pharmacy. They will throw it away safely.
- If someone takes too much medicine or takes the wrong medicine, **call Poison Control** (toll free) **1-800-222-1222.**

questions, call your nurse clinician, your clinic, or your pharmacy.

## When should you call the doctor?

Call the doctor/nurse if your child has:

- A fever or chills
- A lump, swelling, redness, oozing, or bruising at the injection site that does not go away
- Any symptoms that concern you

## It's good to ask questions!

This sheet is not specific to your child. It gives general information. If you have any

At Children's & Women's Health Centre of British Columbia we believe parents are partners on the health care team. We want you to be as informed as possible.

This pamphlet will answer some of your questions. Please ask questions and share your concerns.