

SUBCUTANEOUS (SUBQ) SELF-INJECTION VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Introduction

“Hello, my name is Heather Brand and I’m a clinician here at Planned Parenthood of Greater Texas. And today we will be covering how to do a subcutaneous, or SubQ, injection for gender affirming hormone therapy.”

Step 1: Supplies

“First, you want to make sure you have all the correct supplies. You should be given written instructions from your healthcare provider detailing how to perform your injection, as well as a medication titration guide with your dose and any medication adjustments you’ll be making until your next follow up.

For each injection, you should have a clean, flat surface, clean hands, your medication, a 1 ml syringe, two needles (one for drawing up your medication and one for your injection), two alcohol prep pads (one for cleaning your vial and one for cleaning your injection site), a band-aid, and a sharps container for your used injection supplies

To discard your injection supplies, you can purchase a sharps bin at the pharmacy. You can also use a laundry detergent bottle or a milk carton – something that’s a hard plastic. As long as you write ‘sharps’ on the container, securely fasten the top and put tape around that as well, you can dispose of that in your regular trash. All of your injection supplies are meant for single use, which means you use them once and then you immediately put them in your sharps container.”

Step 2: Prepare your medication

“When you pick up your medication, you should always check that you have been given the correct medication (depo-testosterone, depo-estradiol, testosterone valerate, estradiol valerate, for example) and the correct strength.

The medication name should be clearly displayed on vial. You will most likely see the brand name slightly larger with the generic medication name underneath.

Common testosterone strengths include 200mg/ml or 100mg/ml and common estradiol strengths include 20mg/ml or 5mg/ml. The strength of the medication will be on the label underneath the medication name. If you were given the incorrect strength, this will require you to draw up a different amount of medication, so notify your healthcare provider if this happens.

You also need to check the expiration date of your medication. The expiration date should be in smaller text on the label next to the lot number. Do not use your medication past the expiration date!

Before you draw up your medication, hold your vial up to the light to check for ‘floaters’ or other contaminants in the vial. If your medication looks contaminated, do not use it and contact the pharmacy. Keep the medication in case the pharmacy asks you to return it.

The hormone is suspended in oil, which can be a bit more uncomfortable to inject, so before performing the injection, roll the vial in your hands to warm up the medication.”

Step 3: Prepare your syringe

“First, pop the top off of your vial. Once that goes off, it does not go back on. The rubber stopper in the center of the vial keeps your medication from spilling out. Before each use, you always want to clean the top of your vial off with an alcohol prep pad. So with a single swipe, clean off the rubber stopper and allow it to air dry. Do not wipe off the vial with anything else.

First you’re going to prepare your syringe for drawing up your medication. When you twist on your needles, try not to touch the tips of your supplies to keep everything clean. A 22 gauge needle is a good size for drawing up your medication. Make sure you twist from the base and not from the top, which is too flimsy and you may accidentally poke yourself. Pull this green safety feature out of the way. This feature is here so that when you’re done using this needle, instead of putting on this plastic top and accidentally poking yourself, you’ll simply push down on a flat surface until you hear it click, securely closing your needle.

Draw air into the syringe that is equal to your dose of medication. By putting air from your syringe into the vial, you’ll help maintain pressure in the vial, making it easier to draw up your medication in the future. So for example, today we will be drawing up 0.2mLs into the syringe, same as our dose. So, I pull the plunger back to the 0.2mL mark.

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Pull the top off of your needle, and then holding your vial on a flat surface, put the needle through the middle of your rubber stopper. Inject the air into your vial. Flip the vial upside down and pull your plunger way past your medication dose, because first you'll just be drawing up air. Then push your plunger to your medication line, ensuring that all air goes out of your syringe.

Turn the vial right side up, pull the needle straight out, and cap your needle using a flat surface. Do not use your any part of your body to close your needle. Then, twisting from the base, remove the needle and immediately dispose in your sharps bin.

As long as you don't push your plunger down, your medication will not spill out of the syringe. And now we are going to prepare our syringe for our injection. A 22 gauge, 1 in. needle is a good size for performing a subcutaneous injection. So, twisting from the base, give a firm twist and pull your safety feature out of the way. Set your needle down."

Step 4: Selecting your injection site

"Now that your medication is ready, you're going to get your injection site ready. For subcutaneous, or SubQ, injections, you will perform the abdomen or in the top of the thigh. If you have trouble performing the injection, a support person can perform the injection in the back of the arm. Speak with your healthcare provider and they can review this type of injection with you and your support person."

Option A: Injecting into your abdomen

Step 5: Prepare your injection site

"For performing subcutaneous injections of the abdomen, be sure to inject at least an inch away from the belly button and do not inject above the belly button. Make sure you rotate sides each week. With your other alcohol pad, pinch the skin, wipe in a circular motion away from the injection site, and allow to air dry."

Step 6: Inject your medication

"Pull the cap off of your needle. Pinch the skin and insert the needle at a 45 degree angle. You want to insert the needle 3/8 to 5/8 of the way in. Insert the needle in a smooth motion, push the plunger all the way down, and pull the needle straight out."

Step 7: Dispose of your needle

"Immediately cap your needle, dispose in the sharps bin, and apply your band-aid."

Option B: Injecting into your thigh

Step 5: Prepare your injection site

"Now that your medication is ready, you're going to get your injection site ready. For performing subcutaneous injections, we perform this injection on the top of the thigh. So take the edge of one hand and place it at the top of your kneecap. Then your second hand on top of that one, and then that first hand on top of that one. Where that third hand is on the top of the thigh is where you will perform your injection. Open your alcohol prep pad, pinch the skin, and in a circular motion wiping away from your injection site, clean the skin and allow it to air dry."

Step 6: Inject your medication

"Pull the cap off the needle. Pinch the skin. Insert the needle at a 45 degree angle. You want to insert the needle 3/8 to 5/8 of the way in. In a smooth motion, insert your needle into the skin, push the plunger all the way down, and pull the needle straight out."

Step 7: Dispose of your needle

"Immediately cap your needle on a flat surface, dispose in the sharps bin, and apply your band-aid."

Closing

"Thank you for watching this video on how to perform a self-injection. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact your healthcare provider."