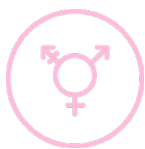


# Injection Guide

## Intramuscular (IM)

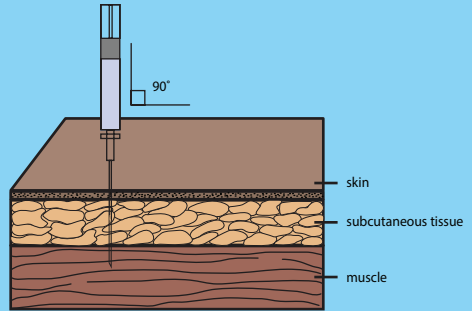


# WHAT IS AN INTRAMUSCULAR INJECTION?

An intramuscular injection, delivers medication deep into the muscle tissue. This allows the medication to be quickly absorbed into the bloodstream.

Intramuscular shots are given at a 90° angle. The needle enters the skin vertically and directly down in a quick, dart-like movement.

Needles for IM injections can be 21-23 Gauge, 1-1.5 inches.



## 1

### SETTING UP FOR THE INJECTION

Find a comfortable, well-lit working place and inject at the same time of day, each time you do your injection.

Clean your work area & assemble supplies

(FIGURE 1):

- Medication in a vial
- Disposable syringe and two needles: one to draw up medication and one injection needle.
- 2 Alcohol swabs  
(one for vial, one for skin)
- Puncture-proof needle/sharps disposal container (refer to page 5)
- Check the expiration date on the medication vial. *Do not use a medication with visible particles, medication that is discolored, or that is past the expiration date. (Medication is generally clear or light yellow when fresh and safe to use.)*



(FIGURE 1)

# 2

## PREPARING THE INJECTION DOSE

**If you are unsure what your dose is, STOP and call your doctor's office for help.**

- Take the cap off the vial. Clean the rubber stopper with one alcohol swab. (FIGURE 2)
- Check the package containing the syringe. If the package has been opened or damaged, do not use the syringe. Connect a sterile 18 G needle to the syringe.
- Pull the 18 G needle cover straight off the needle. Then, pull back the plunger and draw air into the syringe. The amount of air drawn into the syringe should be the same amount (mL or cc) as the dose of medication that your doctor prescribed.
- **Do not let the needle touch any surfaces.**
- Hold the vial on your flat working surface and insert the needle straight down through the center of the rubber stopper into the bottle. (FIGURE 3)
- Push the plunger of the syringe down and push the air from the syringe into the vial. (FIGURE 4)



(FIGURE 2)



(FIGURE 4)



(FIGURE 3)

- Keeping the needle in the vial, turn the vial upside down.
- Position the needle so the liquid is covering the tip of the needle. You may need to pull the needle out slightly to make sure the tip is completely covered by the liquid
- Keeping the vial upside down, slowly pull back on the plunger to fill the syringe with the medication to the number (mL or cc) that matches the dose your doctor ordered (FIGURE 5).
- Keeping the needle in the vial, check for air bubbles in the syringe. If there are air bubbles, gently tap the syringe with your fingers until the air bubbles rise to the top of the syringe. Then slowly push the plunger up to force the air bubbles out of the syringe without removing the needle from the bottle.
- After air bubbles are gone, pull the plunger back to the number (mL or cc) marking on the syringe that matches your dose.
- Pull the syringe with needle out of the bottle, remove the needle (discarding it into the sharps container), and place a new 21-23 G needle securely on the syringe. Remove the protective cap from the injecting needle. Do not press on the plunger while you change needles.
- Check to make sure that you still have the correct dose in the syringe. It is VERY important that you use the exact dose prescribed by your doctor.



(FIGURE 5)

## TIPS FOR REDUCING INJECTION PAIN

- » **Never reuse needles**
- » **Use separate drawing up (draws fluid out of bottles) and injecting needles**
- » **Let the skin dry fully from the alcohol wipe before beginning the injection**
- » **Keep the muscles in the injection area warm and relaxed**
- » **Inject medicine that is at room temperature**
- » **Break through the skin quickly with the needle**
- » **Insert the needle straight into the skin, and pull it straight out again without changing direction or wiggling the syringe.**

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR DISPOSING OF “SHARPS”

Improper disposal of syringes, needles, and other sharp objects can pose a health risk and damage the environment. **Sharps must be disposed of in a hard container. It is illegal to dispose of loose sharps in standard household waste.**

To dispose of medical sharps, first place them in a sealable, puncture-resistant container:

- A home sharps container (purchased from pharmacies).
- A plastic container (a liquid-detergent bottle or milk jug) sealed with tape.
- A metal coffee can sealed with tape.

Disposal sites will not accept loose needles or sharps in bags or glass containers.

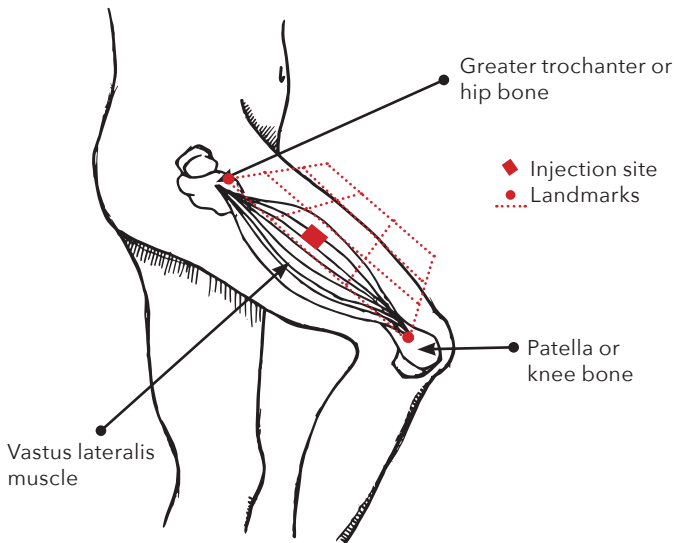
# 3

## SELECTING AND PREPARING THE INJECTION SITE

- **Vastus lateralis muscle in the thigh**

The upper thigh is a good site if you are doing self-injection of your medication.

- To find the appropriate location: Look at the top of your thigh, and imagine dividing it into a three by three grid.
- The injection will go into the outer middle third.



# 4

## GIVE THE INJECTION

- Wash your hands. Hand washing is the most important thing you can do to prevent infection.
- Clean the injection site skin (FIGURE 6) with a new alcohol swab; let the skin air dry (do not pat, rub, or blow on skin to dry it).
- Pull the skin taut around the injection site.
- Hold the prepared syringe with the hand you will use to give the injection.
- Insert the IM needle to a depth of at least one inch into the muscle at a 90 degree angle with one quick and firm motion (FIGURE 7).
- After inserting the needle into the muscle, keep the skin pulled tight and firmly push the plunger down slowly and completely to finish the injection.
- Gently press a sterile piece of gauze on the injection site. Hold pressure on the site until there is no bleeding. You can use an adhesive bandage if needed.



(FIGURE 6)



(FIGURE 7)

The information in this booklet has been adapted with permission from a handbook created by Fenway Health and Planned Parenthood of the Southern Finger Lakes. **Fenwayhealth.org**

The instructions are based on information created and provided by the University of Michigan.



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