

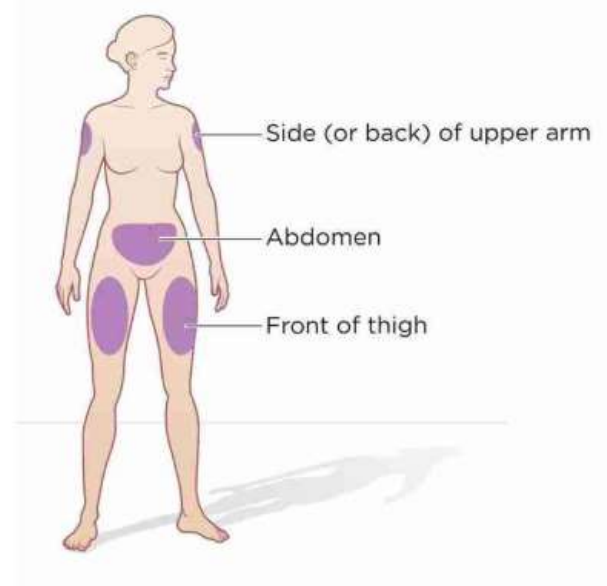
# How to Administer a subcutaneous “Sub-Q” Injection

## Preparing for a Sub-Q injection:

The location of injection is important for subcutaneous injections. The drug needs to be injected into the fatty tissue just below the skin. Some areas of the body have a more easily accessible layer of tissue, where a needle injected under the skin will not hit muscle, bone, or blood vessels.

## The most common injection sites are:

- Abdomen: at or under the level of the belly button, about two inches away from the navel
- Arm: back or side of the upper arm
- Thigh: front of the thigh



## How to administer a subcutaneous injection:

Wash your hands. Wash your hands with soap and warm water to prevent potential infection. Be sure to thoroughly scrub between fingers, on the backs of hands, and under fingernails. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) recommends lathering for 20 seconds — the time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” twice.

Assemble the following supplies: Needle and syringe with medication or auto-injector pen, alcohol pads, gauze, puncture-resistant container to discard the used needles and syringe (typically a red, plastic “sharp’s container”), bandages

Clean and inspect the injection site. Before injecting medication, examine your skin to ensure no bruising, burns, swelling, hardness, or irritation in the area—alternate injection sites to prevent damage to an area with repeated injections. Then you should clean the skin with an alcohol swab. Let the alcohol dry thoroughly before doing the injection.

Prepare the syringe with medication. Before withdrawing medication from a vial and injecting yourself or someone else, make sure you’re using the correct medicine, at the correct dose, at the proper time, and in the right manner. Use a new needle and syringe with every injection.

## Preparing a syringe:

### 1. Remove the cap from the vial.

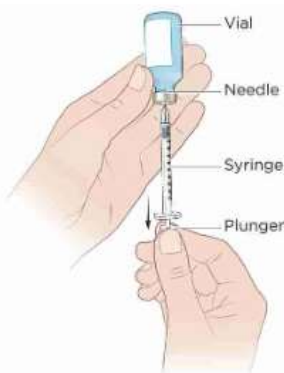
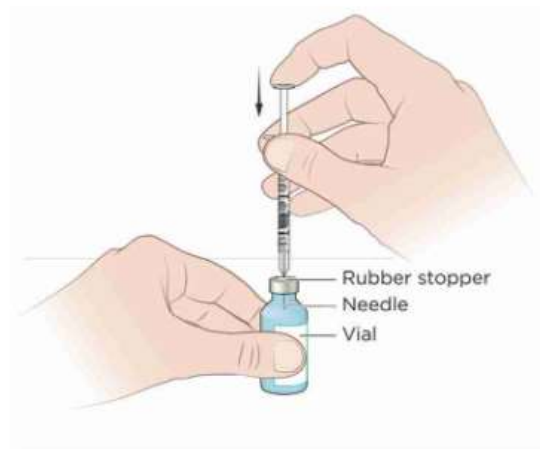
If the vial is multidose, make a note about when the vial was first opened.  
The rubber stopper should be cleaned with an alcohol swab.

### 2. Draw air into the syringe.

Draw back the plunger to fill the syringe with air up to the dose that you'll be injecting. This is done because the vial is a vacuum, and you need to add an equal amount of air to regulate the pressure. This makes it easier to draw the medication into the syringe. Don't worry, though — if you forget this step, you can still get the medication out of the vial.

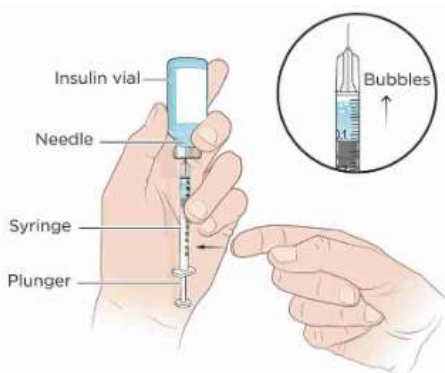
### 3. Insert air into the vial.

Remove the cap from the needle and push the needle through the rubber stopper at the top of the vial. Inject all the air into the vial. Be careful to not touch the needle to keep it clean.



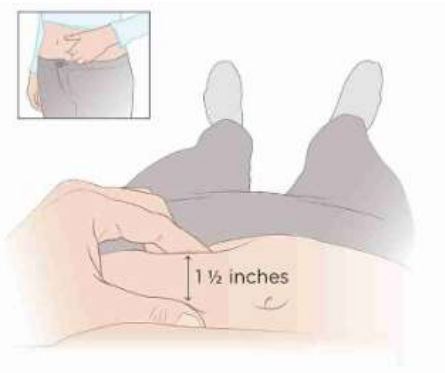
### 4. Withdraw the medication.

Turn the vial and syringe upside down so the needle points upward. Then pull back on the plunger to withdraw the correct amount of medication.



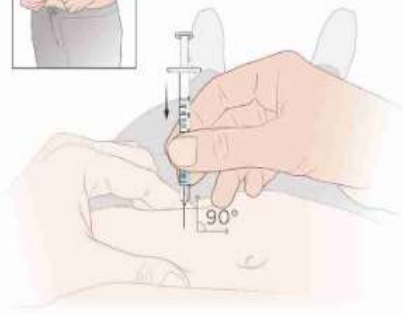
### 5. Remove any air bubbles.

Tap the syringe to push any bubbles to the top and gently depress the plunger to push the air bubbles out.



### 6. Pinch your skin.

Take a big pinch of skin between your thumb and index finger and hold it. (Your thumb and forefinger should be about an inch and a half apart.) This pulls the fatty tissue away from the muscle and makes the injection easier.



### **7. Inject the needle.**

Inject the needle into the pinched skin at a 90-degree angle. You should do this quickly, but without great force. If you have very little fat on your body, you may need to inject the needle at a 45-degree angle to the skin.



### **8. Insert the medication.**

Slowly push the plunger to inject the medication. You should inject the entire amount of medication.

### **9. Withdraw the needle.**

Let go of the pinched skin and withdraw the needle. Discard the used needle in a puncture-resistant sharp's container.

### **10. Apply pressure to the site.**

Use gauze to apply light pressure to the injection site. If there's any bleeding, it should be very minor. You may notice a little bruising later. This is common and nothing to be concerned about.



## ✓ Sharps Disposal **Dos**

- **DO** immediately place used needles and other sharps in a sharps disposal container to reduce the risk of needle sticks, cuts or punctures.
- **DO** use an FDA-cleared sharps disposal container, if possible. If using a household container, use a heavy-duty plastic or metal household container with a screw-on lid. A good example of a household container is a laundry detergent bottle.
- If using a plastic container, look for the #2 HDPE symbol to make sure the plastic is strong enough not to be pierced by the sharps.
- Clearly label household sharps containers with "DO NOT RECYCLE" and "SHARPS".
- When disposing of the container, screw the cap on tightly and cover the top and cap with a strong tape, like duct tape.
- Dispose with household trash. Make sure the garbage container has a lid to prevent tampering.
- **DO** be careful not to overfill your sharps container. A good rule of thumb is to fill the container two-thirds of the way and prepare it for disposal.
- **DO** contact your local waste hauler for recommendations specific to your area.



Photo courtesy of diabetesforecast.com

## ✗ Sharps Disposal **DON'Ts**

- **DON'T** throw loose needles or other sharps into the trash.
- **DON'T** flush needles and sharps down the toilet.
- **DON'T** put needles and sharps into your recycling bin.

