

Giving Myself a Drug by Subcutaneous Injection (subcutaneous means "just under the skin")

What supplies will I need to give myself a needle?

- Supplies:
- ✓ Syringe (3ml size or less) with short needle (5/8 inch or less)
 - ✓ Alcohol swabs
 - ✓ Drug prescribed by your doctor
 - ✓ Written instructions including:
 - name of the drug, how much to give, how often to give it
 - ✓ Puncture proof container for used syringes (eg. coffee can)

Getting Ready:

1. Gather your supplies and bring to an area with good lighting.
2. Check the package of the drug for: drug name(s), amount in container, special instructions (eg. Keep refrigerated).
3. Compare to your written instructions:
The name of my drug is _____
How much do I give? _____
How often do I give it? _____
4. Check the drug in the vial. It should be a clear, colourless liquid with no particles. (Do not shake the vial. This will make the liquid frothy and hard to measure in the syringe.)
5. Wash your hands with soap and water.
6. Remove the plastic cap from the drug vial and discard. Wipe the rubber stopper with an alcohol swab and allow it to dry (for 10 seconds).

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7. Remove the needle cap from the syringe. Hold the syringe with the needle pointing up so that the numbers are easy to read.
8. Pull the plunger down to about 0.5 ml mark on the syringe.
9. Put the needle through the rubber stopper of the drug vial and turn both vial and syringe upside down.
10. Push the plunger in as far as it will go, pushing all of the air into the vial.
11. Make sure the needle tip is kept in the liquid while withdrawing the drug dose. Pull down *slowly* on the plunger to the correct number on the syringe.
12. *Before pulling the needle out of the vial*, double check that you have only liquid in the syringe and no air bubbles. Check this by holding the syringe in front of a light and rotating it slowly.
13. If there are a lot of air bubbles in the syringe, *slowly* reinject the liquid back into the vial and withdraw it again.
[A small amount of air in the syringe would not hurt you, but it would prevent you from getting the whole drug dose.]
14. Checking your instructions on page 1, draw down the plunger until your full dose is in the syringe. Remove the needle from the vial.
[There is always a little extra drug in the vial, but only give the amount ordered by your doctor. The small extra amount must be discarded.]
15. Recap your needle carefully until ready to inject.

Where on my body should I give my injection?

The best area to give your injection is the fat layer of *your abdomen* in any spot you can pinch up some skin and fat with one hand.

[Stay about two inches away from your belly button area. Also, do not inject into skin that is an incision, scar, bruise or has a large blood vessel that can be seen under the skin.]

Other choices of injection sites could be the back of your upper arms or tops of your thighs. Ask your nurse to help you choose the best site for you.

How do I give myself the injection?

1. Open an alcohol swab. Clean the skin where you plan to inject.
2. Hold the loaded syringe in one hand just as if it was a pencil and pull off the needle cap.
3. With your other hand, take a wide pinch of skin on your abdomen, around the area you have just cleaned with alcohol.
4. Set the heel of your hand with the syringe on your abdomen and touch the needle tip to the skin at a slight angle.
5. When you are ready, push the needle into the skin all the way (no needle showing). Once you start pushing the needle in, don't stop.
(Your first time to do this is the hardest!)
6. With the hand holding the syringe, use your thumb or finger to slowly push the plunger in all the way, then count to ten.
** Be careful not to pull the needle out as you do this! **
7. Pull the needle straight out of the skin and discard carefully in a puncture proof container.
8. Wipe the skin gently with an alcohol swab.
9. Check off the date on your pocket calendar to keep track of the days that you have taken your injection.

Congratulations!! You did it!

Ask your nurse for help and support while learning this new skill.

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