

Intramuscular injection instructions

1. What items do I need to give an intramuscular (IM) injection?

- The correct size needle and syringe
- Vial containing the medication
- One alcohol wipe
- You may use gloves for your protection or for the person receiving the shot

2. Where can I give an IM injection?

There are many sites on the body where it is safe to give intramuscular injections. Please follow the injection site directions as detailed by your medical provider or use these instructions as a guide.

Precautions

- It is important to follow these instructions so you do not give the injection directly into nerves, blood vessels, joints, or bones.
- Rotate where you give injections. Scar tissue can accumulate and negatively affect the potency of the medication if you give an injection in the same place every day or even every week.

Gluteal Muscle (Hip)

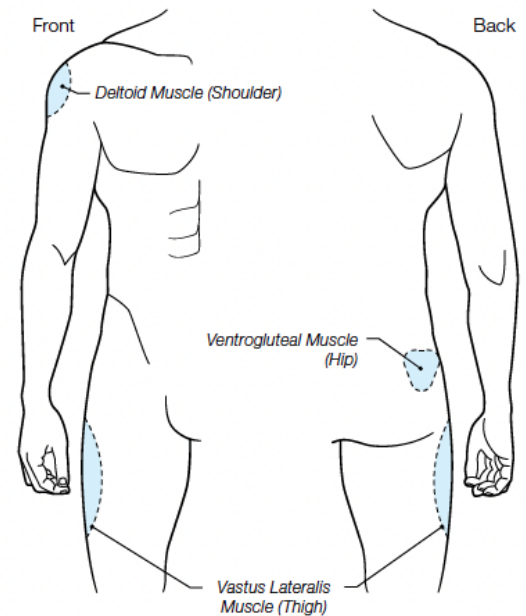
- The hip has good bone landmarks and poses very little danger of hitting blood vessels or nerves.
- Place your thumb at the base of your tailbone and bring it straight across midway to your hip.
- Put your index finger about 2 inches (5 cm) below the ridge of your hip bone. The V-shaped area between your thumb and index finger is the ventrogluteal muscle.

Vastus Lateralis Muscle (Thigh)

- This is the recommended site for self-injections because it is easy to see and access.
- To find this muscle, divide your top thigh area into three equal parts – top (near your hip), middle, and bottom (near your knee).
- Put your thumb in the middle of the top of the thigh and your fingers along the side. This is the correct muscle location.

Deltoid Muscle (Shoulder)

- This site is recommended if someone else will give you the shot. You can sit, stand, or lie down to receive the shot.
- Imagine an upside-down triangle on the side of your upper arm. To find the base of the triangle, feel for the bone that goes across the top of the upper arm. This bone is called the acromion process, and the bottom of this bone will be the baseline of the triangle.
- The point of the triangle is directly below the middle of the base, at about the level of the armpit.
- The correct injection area is in the center of the triangle, 1 to 2 inches (2.5 to 5 cm) below the bottom of the acromion process.



Sites on the body where intramuscular injections can be given.

3. How do I transfer medication to the syringe?

1. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and dry them completely. Put on gloves if necessary.
2. Remove the plastic cap from the medication vial and use an alcohol wipe to clean the rubber stopper by rubbing back and forth with the wipe.
3. With an unused syringe, remove the needle cap, exposing the needle. Insert the needle into the rubber of the vial that was just cleaned (Fig. 1).

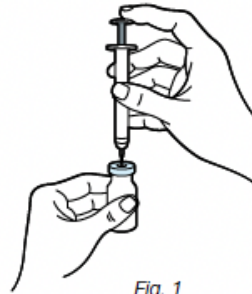


Fig. 1

4. Turn the vial and syringe upside down and carefully draw the liquid medication back into the syringe to the desired amount needed for one injection (Fig. 2).
5. If you see any air bubbles in the syringe, use your fingers to lightly tap or flick the syringe to draw the bubbles to the top of the syringe near the needle. This action will help expel any air in the syringe.



Fig. 2

Note: It is normal for a small amount of medication to come out of the needle as well (Fig. 3).

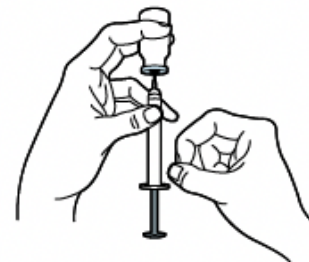


Fig. 3

6. You are now ready to inject.

4. How do I inject medication into IM tissue?

1. After completing all the steps above, wipe the injection site multiple times with an alcohol pad. Let the area dry. Place the syringe between your thumb and first finger. Let the barrel of the syringe rest on your second finger, similarly to how you hold a pen. (Fig. 4)
2. With the other hand (not holding the syringe), use your index and thumb to pull the skin slightly taut. Keep holding the skin with your fingers a little to the side of where you plan to insert the needle. Relax the muscle you are about to inject, as a tight muscle is harder to insert a needle into (and can hurt more).
3. Use your wrist to insert the needle at a 90-degree angle (straight in). The action is like shooting a dart (Fig. 4). Do not slowly push the needle in. Do not thrust the needle, as this can cause bruising. The needle is sharp, and it will go through the skin easily when your wrist action is correct. (Fig. 5)

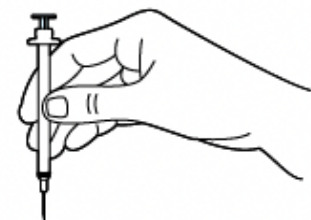


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

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4. Let go of the skin. As you let go of the skin, hold the syringe so it stays pointed straight in..
5. Pull back on the plunger just a little to make sure you aren't in a blood vessel (Fig. 6). Note: If blood enters the syringe, you may have hit a blood vessel. Remove the needle and dispose of both the syringe and the medicine. Repeat the process of cleaning and filling a new syringe. When you administer the injection again, select a new injection site.
6. Push down firmly on the plunger to inject the medication into the body. Note: Some medications may sting slightly upon injection. To avoid pain, do not inject the medication rapidly but rather slowly and steadily.
7. Pull the needle out quickly once all the medication is injected, at the same angle it went in.
8. Dispose of the syringe and needle in a sharps container.

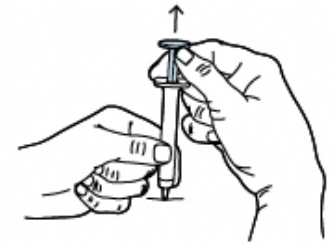


Fig. 6

5. How can I get rid of used syringes and needles?

You can purchase a Sharps Container, which is a hard-plastic container made especially for used syringes and needles, at your local pharmacy. If you did not purchase this container with your medication, you can use a hard-plastic container with a screw-on top, such as a clothing softener or hard plastic detergent bottle. Make sure you can easily put both the syringe and the needle into the container. Whatever container you choose, make sure that the needles cannot break through the sides, bottom, or top.

Call your primary care physician or your local pharmacy to find out what your state or local requirements are for disposing of used syringes and needles. More information is available at safeneedledisposal.org.



6. Video resources



[How to prepare medication for a self-administered injection.](#)

[▶ How to Prepare Your Medication for a Self-Administered Injection](#)



[How to give yourself an intramuscular injection.](#)

[▶ How to Give Yourself an Intramuscular Injection](#)

