

MEDICATION INFO SHEET

Administering a Subcutaneous Injection

- If you are injecting the drug yourself, be sure you understand how to measure the **exact dose** of the medication your doctor has prescribed, as well as the **proper method** for preparing, injecting and disposing of the needle and syringe.

Preparing Your Injection:

- Inspect the vial of medication before you use it. The solution should be clear and there should be no particles in the liquid. Do not use the vial if there are particles or if it is discoloured (most drugs are clear and colourless). Discard it and use a fresh vial for this dose.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water. Dry on a clean towel.
- Remove the plastic cap from the drug vial. Wipe the top of the rubber stopper with an alcohol swab and let it dry for 10 seconds.
- Remove the needle cap, and push the needle through the rubber stopper and into the vial.
- Turn the vial upside down and make sure that the needle tip is in the solution. Pull the needle partway out, if you need to.
- Pull back the syringe plunger slowly, to draw out your dose. Check the prescription label for the volume of solution you need to withdraw from the vial.
- Remove the needle from the vial and gently tap the syringe barrel (needle end up) to clear any air bubbles from the syringe. Do not touch the needle surface, just the syringe barrel. Draw back the plunger a little bit (to collect the bubbles), and then slowly push the plunger to eject the air.

Note: It is important to eliminate large air bubbles because they take up space needed for medication and they may cause discomfort when injected.

- After removing the bubbles, check the dose of medication in the syringe to be sure you have drawn up the correct amount.
- Carefully put the cover back over the needle. Do not stick yourself with the needle.

For more information on administering a subcutaneous medication please call the Cancer Centre pharmacist or your doctor or nurse.

Injecting Your Subcutaneous Medication:

- Select a place on your skin where you will give the injection
 - Rotate injection sites, so that the same site is only used once every 6 to 7 weeks. This is important because repeated injections in the same area can cause scarring and hardening of fatty tissue that will interfere with absorption of medication.
 - Use an injection site where there is a layer of fat between the skin and muscle, such as the thighs, upper arms or abdomen.
 - Use a chart for injection sites, and mark each site once it is used. (An injection chart is given on the next page.)
- You may wish to warm up your medication by gently rolling the filled syringe between your hands for a few minutes. A warm injection is more comfortable than a cold one.
- Expose the injection site. Clean the skin in a circular motion with an alcohol swab, beginning at the center and moving outwards, and let the area dry for about 10 seconds.
- Remove the needle cap. Hold the syringe barrel as if you were holding a pencil.
- With your other hand, pinch a fold of skin where the injection will be made.
- Hold the syringe at a 45° to 90° angle (half-slanted to straight up from the surface), about 2 inches from the skin surface.
- Insert the needle with a quick jab, as if throwing a dart. The needle should go all of the way into the skin.
- Pull back on the plunger a little. If you see blood in the syringe, do not inject the solution. Remove the syringe right away and discard this syringe. Prepare a new syringe and try again.
- If there is NO blood in the syringe, slowly push the plunger to inject the drug solution.
- Put a clean alcohol swab over the needle and the skin site (do not press down yet), pull out the needle, then press down on the swab over the injection site. Do not massage the site. After 5 seconds, remove the swab. If there is any bleeding, put an adhesive bandage over the injection site.

Note:

- Proper disposal of vials and used needles and syringes is very important. **They should never be reused.** Needles must always be discarded in a puncture resistant container. Ask your pharmacist for a container that you can discard both the needle and syringe in

Injection Chart

Number the injections when you give them, and write the number in one square. Do not inject near the belly-button area. If the injections are given by someone else, you can use the areas on the back. Rotate your sites, so that the same spot is not used more than once every 6 to 7 weeks.

