

# Gender Affirming Hormone Therapy Injection Guide



This information in this booklet has been adapted with permission from Planned Parenthood of the Southern Finger Lakes, which was based on booklets developed by Fenway Health ([Fenwayhealth.org](http://Fenwayhealth.org)) and the University of Michigan (<http://med.umich.edu/1libr/spinalCordInjuryProgram/IMselfInjectionTesto.pdf>)

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# **NEVER REUSE OR SHARE SYRINGES OR NEEDLES**

**If you need needles or syringes and cannot afford to get them from your provider or pharmacy, please visit a local needle exchange.**

# MASSACHUSETTS SYRINGE EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

## **Boston Needle Exchange AHOPE**

Boston, MA | *Boston Public Health*  
Phone: (617-534-3967)

## **AIDS Action Committee ACCESS**

75 Amory St, Boston, MA  
Phone: (627-437-6200)

359 Green St, Cambridge, MA  
Phone: (617-661-3040)

1 Church St, Cambridge, MA  
Phone: (617-661-2508)

## **Project Aware**

Fall River, MA | *SSTAR*  
Phone: (508-324-3561)

## **Tapestry Health Needle Exchange**

Holyoke, MA  
Phone: (417-315-3732) ext.1

## **Love & Safety**

Ipswich, MA  
Phone: (617-549-9880)

## **CAB Health & Recovery Services**

Lynn, MA | *Healthy Streets Outreach Program*  
Phone: (339-440-5633)

1191 Main St, Randolph MA | *Health Innovations*  
Phone: (339-987-5552)

## **Seven Hills SSP**

New Bedford, MA  
Phone: (508-996-0546)

## **Provincetown Needle Exchange**

Provincetown, MA | *AIDS Support Group Cape Cod*  
Phone: (508-487-8311)

# TIPS FOR REDUCING INJECTION PAIN

- **Never reuse needles**
- **Use separate drawing up 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. In Massachusetts, it is illegal to dispose of sharps in standard household waste.

To dispose of medical sharps, first place them in a sealable, puncture-resistant container. You can purchase a home sharps container from most pharmacies. Alternatively, you can use a plastic container, such as a liquid-detergent bottle or milk jug, sealed with tape, to transport used sharps.

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



# **HOW TO GIVE YOURSELF A HORMONE INJECTION INTRAMUSCULAR (IM)**

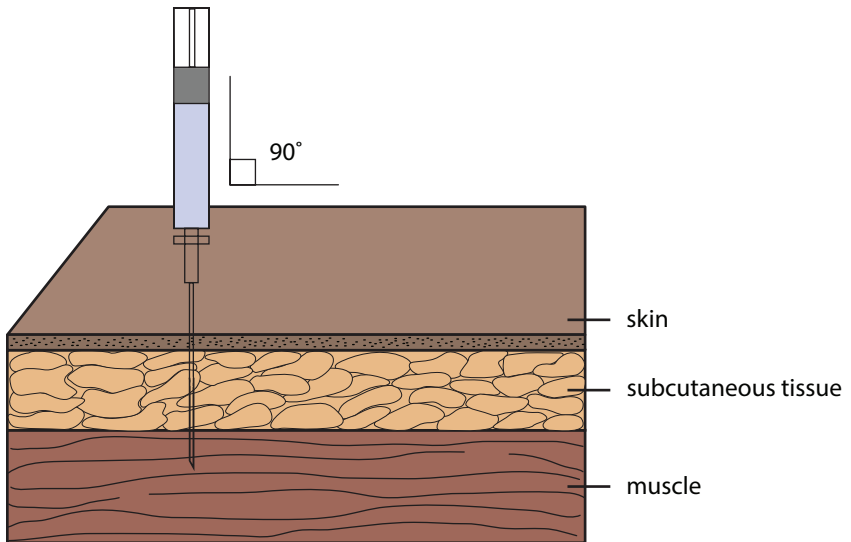


# WHAT IS AN INTRAMUSCULAR INJECTION?

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 in length.



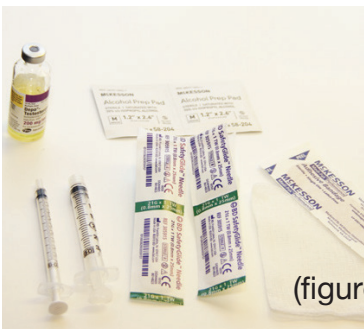
## STEP

# 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 21-23 G; 1.5 inch needles (one to draw up medication and one injection needle).
- Alcohol swabs, two (one for vial, one for skin)



(figure 1)

- Puncture proof needle/sharps disposal container
- 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.)*

- Wash your hands. Hand washing is the most important thing you can do to prevent infection.

## STEP

# 2

## PREPARING THE INJECTION DOSE

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



(figure 2)

- 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 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 provider 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)

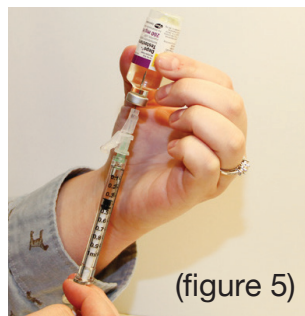


(figure 3)



(figure 4)

- 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 provider ordered (figure 5).



(figure 5)



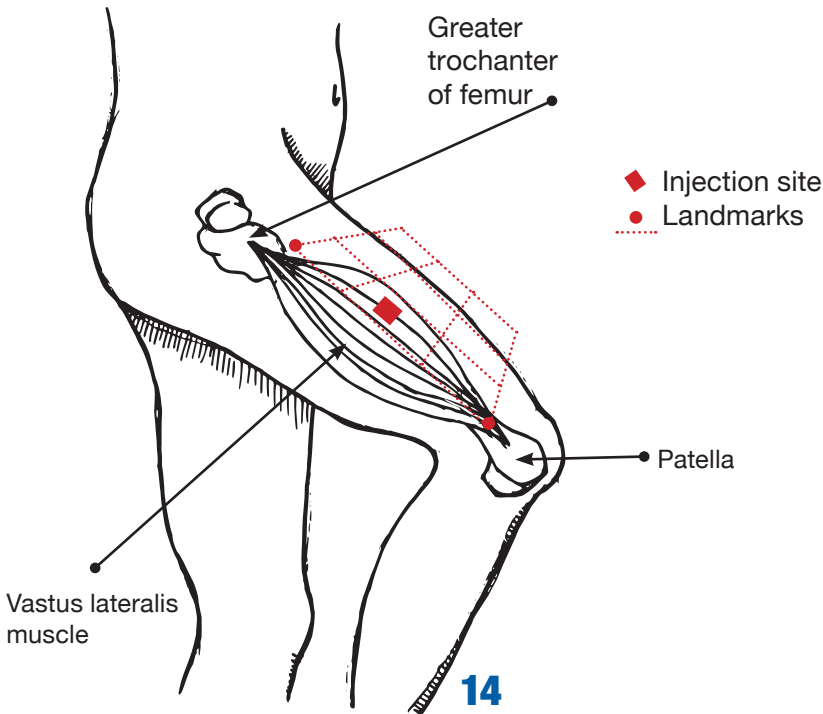
- Keeping the needle in the vial, check for air bubbles in the syringe. If there are air bubbles, gently tap the syringe with your fingers until the air bubbles rise to the top of the syringe. Then slowly push the plunger up to force the air bubbles out of the syringe without removing the needle from 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 the IM Injection 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 provider.
- (figure 6)

# STEP

# 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.



## STEP

# 4

## GIVE THE INJECTION

- Clean the injection site skin (*figure 7*) with a new alcohol swab; let the skin air dry (*do not pat or blow on skin to dry it*).
- Pull the skin tight around the injection site (*figure 8*).



(figure 7)



(figure 8)

- Insert the IM needle into the muscle at a 90 degree angle with one quick and firm motion.
- 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.

# **HOW TO GIVE YOURSELF A HORMONE INJECTION SUBCUTANEOUS (SUBQ)**

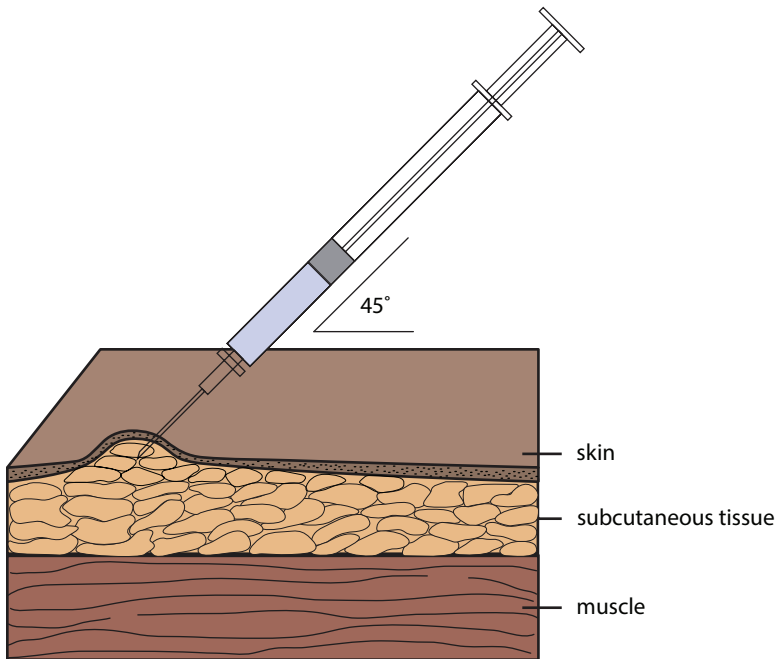


# WHAT IS A SUBCUTANEOUS INJECTION?

A subcutaneous injection, delivers medication into the subcutaneous layer of tissue that is directly under the skin.

Medication delivered this way is more slowly absorbed into the bloodstream than medication that is directly injected into the muscle.

Needle for SubQ injections are usually 23-25 Gauge and 5/8" (inch) in length. Medication should never be drawn up through these needles. Use a separate drawing up needle.



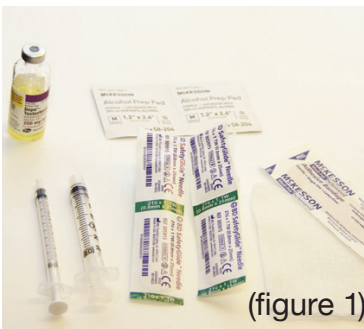
# STEP

# 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 22 G; 1.5 inch to draw up the medication and one 23-25 G; 5/8 inch to inject the medication.
- Alcohol swabs, two (one for vial, one for skin)



- Puncture proof needle/sharps disposal container
- 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.)*

- Wash your hands. Hand washing is the most important thing you can do to prevent infection.

## STEP

# 2

## PREPARING THE INJECTION DOSE

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



(figure 2)

- 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 needle to the syringe.
- Pull the 22 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 provider 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 3)



(figure 4)

- 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 provider ordered (figure 5).



(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 the 23-25 G SC 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 provider.
- (figure 6)

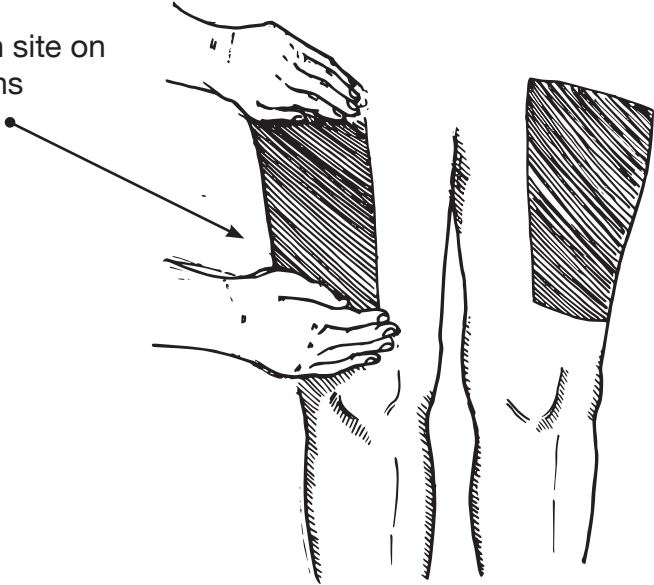
## STEP

# 3

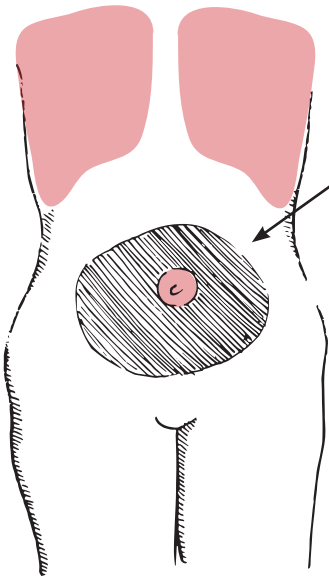
## SELECTING AND PREPARING THE INJECTION SITE

There are a few places you can give yourself a subcutaneous injection including the fronts of your thighs or your abdomen

Injection site on the thighs



**Whichever site you choose to inject, you should be able to firmly grasp and pinch up approximately a 1-inch fold of skin.**



● Injection site on the abdomen

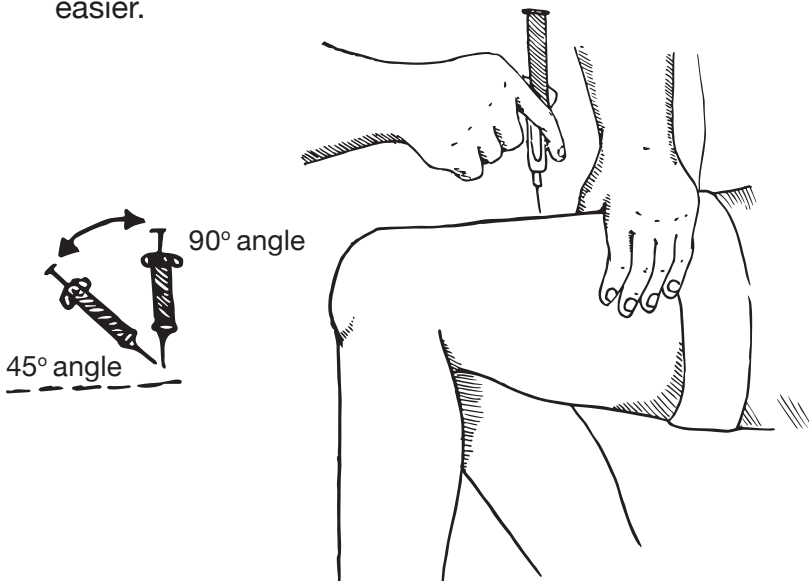
If you choose to inject yourself in the abdomen, avoid the belly button or any bony areas.

## STEP

# 4

## GIVE THE INJECTION

- Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water and dry them.
- Clean the injection site skin with an alcohol swab; let the skin air dry. Do not pat or rub the skin to dry it.
- Hold the prepared syringe with the hand you will use to give the injection.
- With the other hand, pinch a fold of skin (*you will inject into the skin between your fingers*).
- With one quick and firm motion, insert the needle either directly into the skin fold at a 90 degree angle, or angle it slightly (45 degrees), if that is easier.





- After inserting the needle under the skin, keep the skin pinched up as you complete the injection by pushing firmly and slowly down completely on the plunger (*figure 7*).
- Wait 5 seconds, and then pull back on the syringe to remove the needle from your skin. Pull the syringe and needle out at the exact same angle you used to enter the skin. Dispose of the syringe and needle properly, using a sharps container.
- Gently press a sterile piece of gauze on the injection site. Hold pressure on the site until there is no bleeding. You can use a band aid if needed (*figure 8*).



(figure 7)



(figure 8)

# **WE PROVIDE QUALITY, COMPASSIONATE CARE FROM AN INFORMED CONSENT MODEL FOR OUR TRANSGENDER PATIENTS.**

At Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts, we serve transgender people and people at various places on the spectrum of gender identity and expression that are 18 and older. We are committed to improving the way transgender people receive health care in our state and proudly work with our transgender community to lead the way in eliminating barriers to care.

To speak to a nurse if you have a medical question, please call : (800-258-4448)

For health and wellness information, resources & referrals:

Call: 800-258-4448, option 3  
PPLM.org

