

Giving Insulin Injections (Shots)

What do I need to know about insulin injections?

Insulin injections aren't hard to do. But they do take some practice. You'll want to make sure you are doing them right so that you stay healthy and safe. If your symptoms go away, or you decide you "feel fine," don't stop taking your insulin. You need it to stay well.

How do I pick an injection site?

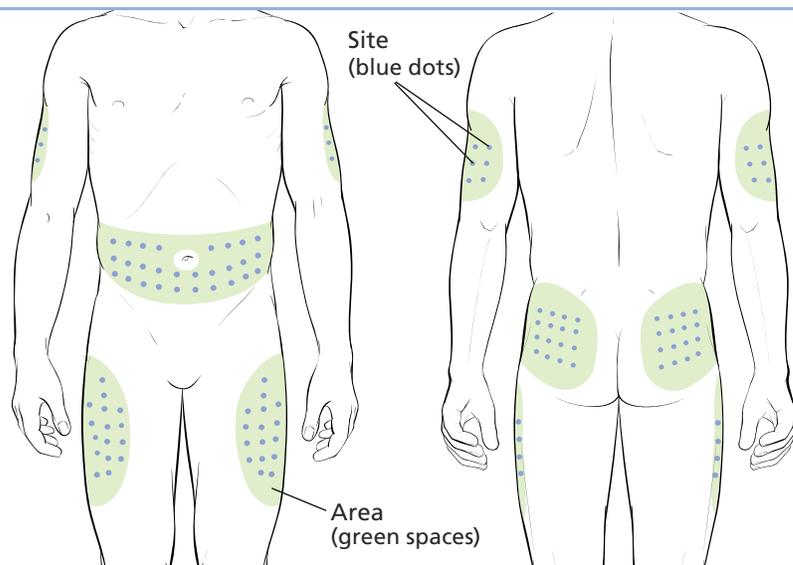
Look at the areas on your body that are best to use (see illustration below). Then, imagine that each area is divided into many spots, or sites. Use a different site in a different area each time you give yourself an injection.

Why is this important? You may need to give yourself several injections each day. If you do them all in the same site, the tissue under the skin will get tough, like a scar. This makes it hard to stick the needle in and makes it harder for the insulin to go into your body.

There isn't a "best place" on your body to inject insulin. But there are 4 areas that are better than others. These are your:

- Belly (abdomen)
- Outside of the upper leg (thigh)
- Outside and back of the upper arm
- Rear end (buttocks)

These places are best because they have more fat under the skin than other parts of your body. They are also easier for most people to reach.



What do I need to do next?

Always follow your doctor's specific instructions for taking insulin. In general:

- 1 Inject insulin into the layer of fat under your skin** (subcutaneous, or Sub-Q layer). When the insulin reaches the fat, it spreads out and is taken into your cells.
- 2 Don't re-use insulin syringes [suh-RINJ-ez] or needles.** This helps ensure that the syringe is sterile (clean) and that the needle is very sharp every time.
- 3 Put used insulin syringes and needles in a red sharps container or a hard plastic container** that won't allow needles to poke through. **Never throw syringes or needles in the trash or flush them down the toilet.**



How do I give an insulin injection?



1 Gather your diabetes supplies together. Wash your hands well with soap and warm water. If you are using an injection pen, follow the steps to the right to get it ready.

2 Pick an injection site. Use a different spot in a different area each time you give insulin. See the illustration on [page 1](#).



3 Draw up the right amount of insulin in the syringe or dial in the dose on your pen. (If using a syringe, wipe the top of the vial with alcohol first.)

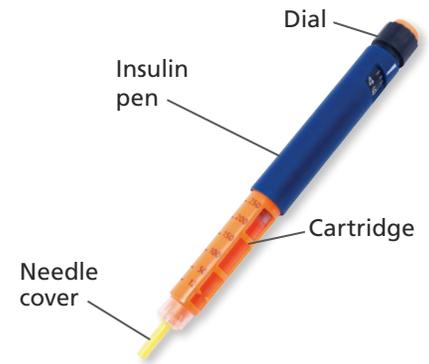


4 Pinch and lift about an inch of skin and fat with your thumb and forefinger.



5 Inject the insulin

- **Insert the needle straight into the skin**, not at an angle. Make sure the needle is all the way in. You might feel a sting.
- **Let go of the skin**, but leave the needle in place. Press the plunger on the syringe, or the injection button on the pen all the way down. Slowly count to 10 before taking the needle out. It can take a bit longer for insulin to come out of a pen than out of a syringe. If insulin is dripping from the needle when you pull it out, that means you need to leave it in longer next time.
- **Press your finger over the site for 10 seconds before letting go.** This helps to stop any bleeding that may happen.



If using an insulin pen:

- **Check the pen before you use it.** Look at the amount of insulin in the cartridge to make sure there's enough for your injection.
- **Check the insulin** to see if it's changed color, is cloudy, or has stuff sitting on the bottom or floating around inside (sediment). If so, take it out and put in a new one.
- **Clean the nub of the pen** (where the needle goes) with alcohol and put on a new needle.
- **Prime the pen. (This is important!)** Dial up 1–2 units of insulin. Take the needle cover off and point the needle straight up. Press the injection button all the way down. Do this until you get a bead or stream of insulin.
- **Follow steps 1–5 (at left) to give an injection.** Then, remove the needle and put it in your needle disposal bin.

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