

How to Self-Administer an Intramuscular Injection

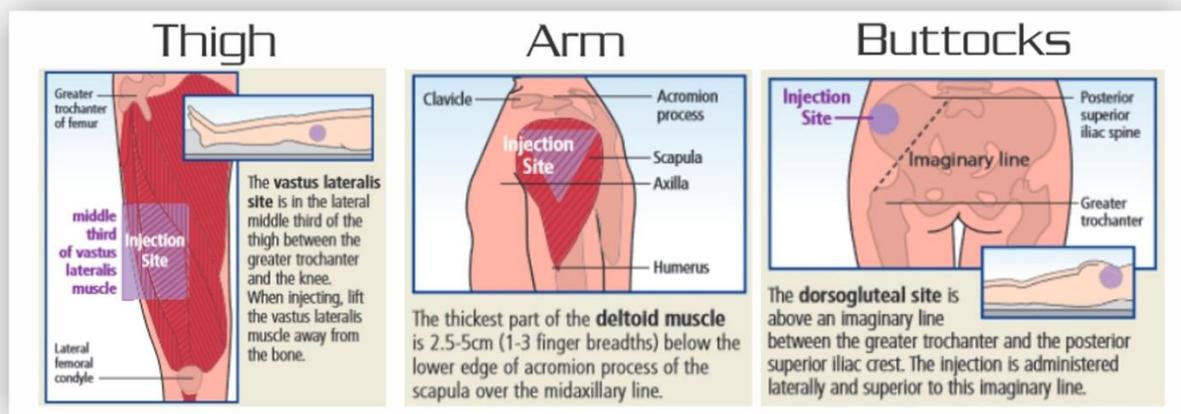
There are three components of a syringe: the needle, barrel, and plunger. The needle is the portion of the syringe that penetrates your skin. The barrel holds the medicine and has markings on it like a ruler (the markings are in milliliters [ml]). The plunger is used to draw medicine into the barrel, but also to inject medicine into the body.

What common locations on my body are best for an intramuscular injection?

Thigh: The thigh is a good place to give yourself an injection because it is easy to see. From a standing position, look at your thigh and divide it horizontally into three equal parts (upper, middle and lower). Target the outer section of the middle third section for the injection. See schematic interpretation below.

Arm/Deltoid: The deltoid muscle has a triangular shape and is easy to locate and access, but is commonly underdeveloped in adults. To locate the landmark for the deltoid muscle, expose the upper arm and find the acromion process by palpating the bony point at the top of your deltoid/outer shoulder. The injection site is in the middle of the deltoid muscle, about 2.5 to 5 cm (1 to 2 inches) below the acromion process. To locate this area, lay three fingers across the deltoid muscle and below the acromion process. The injection site is generally three finger widths below, in the middle of the muscle.

Buttocks: In a standing position, expose one side your buttocks. With an alcohol wipe, swab horizontally from the top of your gluteal cleft between your buttocks outward to the side of your body. Find the middle of that line and locate a point three inches above the swabbed line. From that point, swab a line downward vertically (across the first horizontal line), ending about halfway down your buttock. You will have drawn a cross. In the upper outer square, you will feel a curved bone. The injection site should be administered in the upper outer square below the curved bone.



What items do I need to give an injection?

- One alcohol wipe
- A new needle and syringe that are the correct size. Note: Needles are single use only.
- Disposable gloves, if you have them

When should I contact my healthcare provider?

- If a fever, sneezing, or coughing develops after the injection.
- A lump, swelling, or bruising develops where the injection was done that does not go away.
- You have questions about how to give an injection.

When should I seek immediate care or call 911?

- A rash or itching develops after the injection is administered.
- Shortness of breath develops after the injection is administered.
- The mouth, lips, or face swells after the injection is administered.

How do I give an intramuscular injection?

Wash your hands with soap and dry them completely. Put on gloves if necessary.

- **Open the alcohol wipe:** Swab the area where you plan to administer the injection. Let the area dry. Do not touch this area again until you are ready to administer the injection.
- **Prepare the syringe:** Hold the syringe with your writing hand and pull the needle cover off with your other hand. Place the syringe between your thumb and first finger. Let the barrel of the syringe rest on your second finger. Pull back on the plunger to draw the medicine back into the barrel of the syringe
- **Hold the skin around where you will give the injection:** With your free hand, gently press on and pull the skin so that it is slightly tight.
- **Insert the needle into the muscle:** Hold the syringe barrel tightly and use your wrist to inject the needle through the skin and into the muscle at a 90-degree angle.
- **Check the needle:** Let go of the skin with your other hand. Hold the syringe so it stays pointed straight in. Pull back on the plunger a little to test if you hit a blood vessel. If no blood appears in the barrel move to Inject the Medicine as outlined below. If blood appears in the barrel, remove the needle immediately. DO NOT inject the medicine! Dispose of both the syringe and the medicine. Set up a new dose of medicine and a new syringe. When you administer the second injection, administer it on the opposite leg, arm, hip or buttocks from the first attempt.
- **Inject the medicine:** Gently push down on the plunger to inject the medicine. DO NOT push forcefully as this can produce pain.
- **Remove the needle:** Once the barrel is empty, remove the needle at the same angle as it went in. Place gauze over the area where you gave the injection and apply pressure. If there is no bleeding, or when bleeding stops, remove the gauze. If desired, a band aid can be applied to cover the injection site.

How do I dispose of used syringes and needles?

It is important to dispose of your needles and syringes correctly. DO NOT throw needles into the trash or include amongst recycling materials. Along with the syringe materials, you may receive a hard plastic container made especially for disposing of used syringes and needles. Alternatively, a soda bottle or other plastic bottle with a screw lid can be used. Make sure that both the syringe and needle fit into the container easily and cannot break through the sides. Finally, ask your healthcare provider or a pharmacist what your state or local requirements are for disposing of used syringes and needles.