

# How to Give a Shot — General Instructions

University of  
Pittsburgh  
Medical Center  
Information  
for Patients

This sheet will show you how to give a shot in the fatty tissue below the skin. This is called a subcutaneous (sub-kyu-TAY-nee-us) injection. Ask your doctor or nurse if this method is the correct one for the drug you are going to take. This sheet does **not** apply to insulin shots and blood thinner shots. There are different instruction sheets for them.

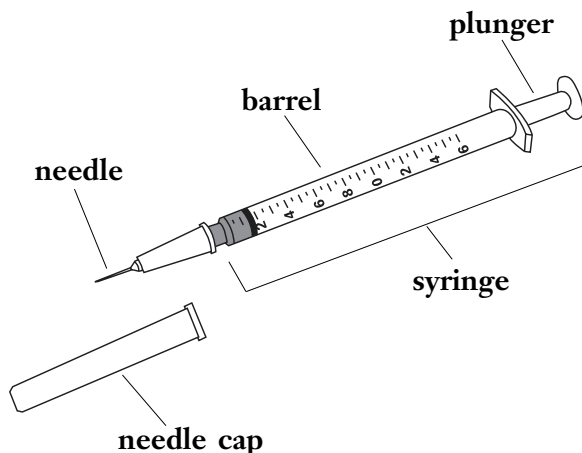
## What you will need

Before you give the shot, you will need the following:

- drug (This comes in a small bottle or vial.)
- alcohol swab, or cotton ball moistened with alcohol
- syringe with needle (You will need a prescription to buy syringes from a pharmacy.)
- hard plastic or metal container with a screw-on or tightly-secured lid

## Parts of a syringe and needle

You will use a syringe and needle to give the shot. The parts are labeled below.



## Drawing up the drug into the syringe

1. Wash the work area (where you will set the drug and syringe) well with soap and water.
2. Wash your hands.
3. Check the drug label to be sure it is what your doctor prescribed. Check the expiration date on the vial.

### Do not use a drug if:

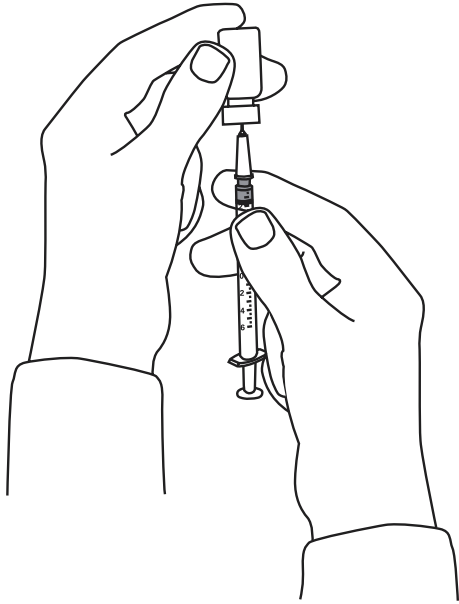
- it is past the expiration date
- you see small pieces floating in it
- it is discolored

Call your pharmacist if this happens.

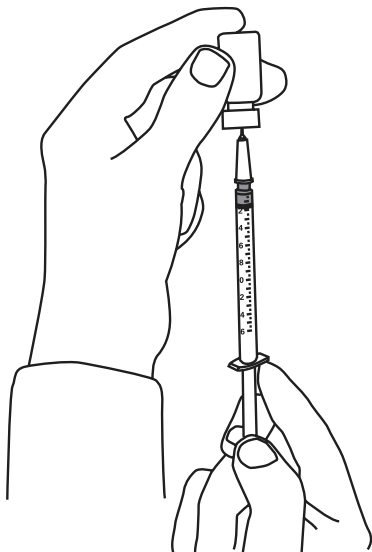
4. Remove the lid from the top of the drug vial. Wipe the rubber top with an alcohol swab or a cotton ball moistened with alcohol.
5. Check to make sure the needle is attached tightly to the syringe. Turn it clockwise (to the right) to tighten it.
6. Remove the plastic needle cap by pulling it straight off. **Do not** touch the needle. If the needle touches any surface, it will need to be replaced before you use it.
7. Pull back the plunger of the syringe to your prescribed dosage. This will draw air into the syringe.
8. Place the drug vial on a flat surface, and push the needle through the rubber top. Push down on the plunger to push air into the vial.

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9. Turn the vial upside down, holding the syringe and needle in place.

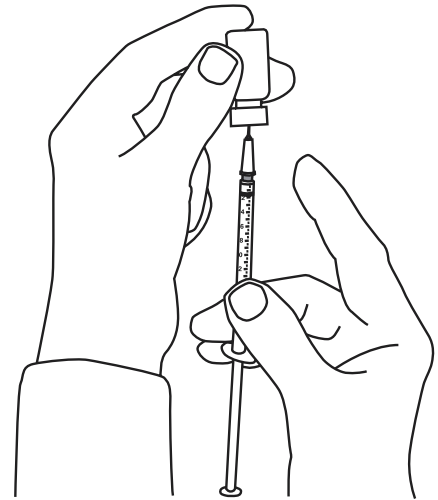


10. Make sure the tip of the needle is in the drug solution. Then pull the plunger back by the flat knob. This will draw the drug into the syringe. Keep pulling on the knob until the drug reaches the prescribed dosage.



11. Check for air bubbles in the syringe. To remove air bubbles from the syringe:

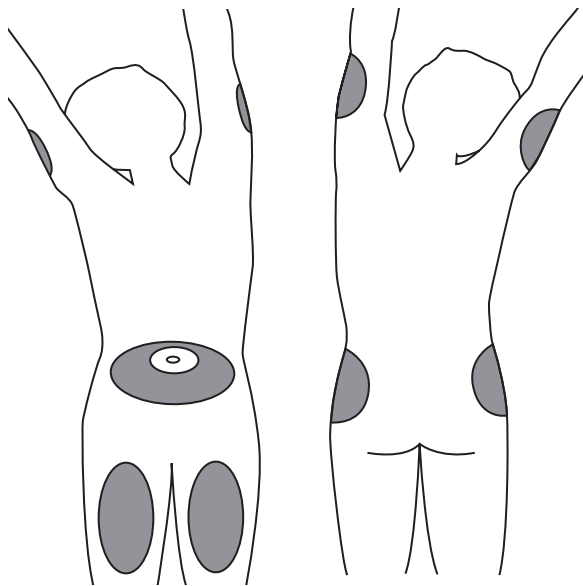
- Hold the syringe with the needle pointing straight up (still in the vial).
- Gently tap the barrel of the syringe so air bubbles float to the top.



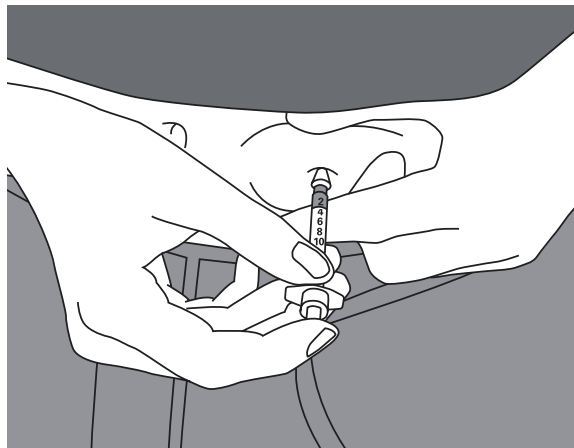
- Still holding the syringe upright, slowly push the plunger until you push all the air out of the syringe, back into the bottle.
  - Check to make sure you have the correct dosage.
  - If you have too much or too little, adjust the plunger again until you have the right amount.
  - Remove the needle from the vial.
12. Replace the needle cap. Place the syringe on a clean, flat surface.

## Giving the shot

Decide where on your body you will give the shot. The diagram below shows general areas on the body where the shot can be given. Be sure to give the shot in a different place each time. You can stay in the same general area, but try to stay at least 1 inch from the last shot, any scars, and your belly button. Keep a diary to remember where your last shot was given.



1. Wipe the area of skin with an alcohol swab or a cotton ball moistened in alcohol.
2. Remove the needle cap. Hold the syringe in one hand.
3. With the other hand, gently pinch up the skin around where you will give the shot (unless your doctor tells you otherwise) and hold firmly.



4. Insert the needle at a 45- to 90-degree angle.
5. Once the needle is in, let go of the skin. Be sure the needle is still left in the skin.
6. Pull back gently on the plunger of the syringe.

**If blood appears** at the tip of the syringe:

- Withdraw the needle, and apply gentle pressure to the site.
- Change the needle, and begin again at another site.

**If no blood appears** at the tip of the syringe:

- Inject the drug slowly.
- Push down on the plunger until all of the drug solution is gone from the syringe.

7. Take the needle out of your skin.
8. If you bleed when the needle comes out, place an alcohol swab or clean cotton ball over the skin right away. Press gently on the swab until bleeding has stopped. Do not rub the skin.
9. Do not re-cap the needle.
10. Throw away the syringe and needle in a hard plastic or metal container. Close the lid tightly. When the container is full, tape the lid down, and throw it away in the garbage. **Note: Check your town's guidelines on syringe disposal.**

## Questions?

If you have any questions about these instructions, call your doctor or nurse at:

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For help in finding a doctor or health service that suits your needs, call the UPMC Referral Service at 412-647-UPMC (8762) or 1-800-533-UPMC (8762).

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