

# Let's Talk About...

## Injection site rotation

Insulin injections aren't hard to do, but they do take some practice. You must give yourself insulin injections in a different site and different area each time. If you do them all in the same place, the tissue under the skin gets 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.

Read on for tips on giving yourself insulin injections and ways to pick an injection site.

### What are some tips for insulin injections?

It's important to give yourself insulin injections the right way so you stay healthy and safe. Here are a few tips to remember:

- Only use needles and syringes once. Put them into your safe disposal container right after you use them.
- Inject insulin into the layer of fat under your skin (subcutaneous layer). When the insulin reaches the fat, it spreads out and goes into your cells.
- These 4 areas have more fat under the skin, are easy to reach, and work well for injecting insulin:
  - Belly (abdomen)
  - Outside of the upper leg (thigh)
  - Outside and back of the upper arm
  - Bottom (buttocks)

### How do I pick an injection site?

To pick an injection site:

- Look at the areas on your body that are best to use for injections (see illustration)
- Imagine each area is divided into many spots or sites
- Figure out a way to remember where to inject the insulin in different places. For example:



- On Monday, use your right arm in the morning, the right side of your tummy at lunch, your right leg before dinner, and your right butt cheek at bedtime.
- Use those same areas on your left side the next day.
- Remember that exercise can change how fast insulin goes into your body. For example, if you give yourself rapid-acting insulin in the leg and then play soccer or basketball, the insulin will go into your body faster.
- Wait 90 minutes after a rapid-acting insulin injection to take a hot bath or shower. Hot water can make insulin go into your body faster.

A hot bath or shower can also speed things up. It's best to wait for about 90 minutes (1½ hours) after your injection of rapid-acting insulin before having a hot bath or shower.

## How do I give a subcutaneous (SUB-Q) injection?

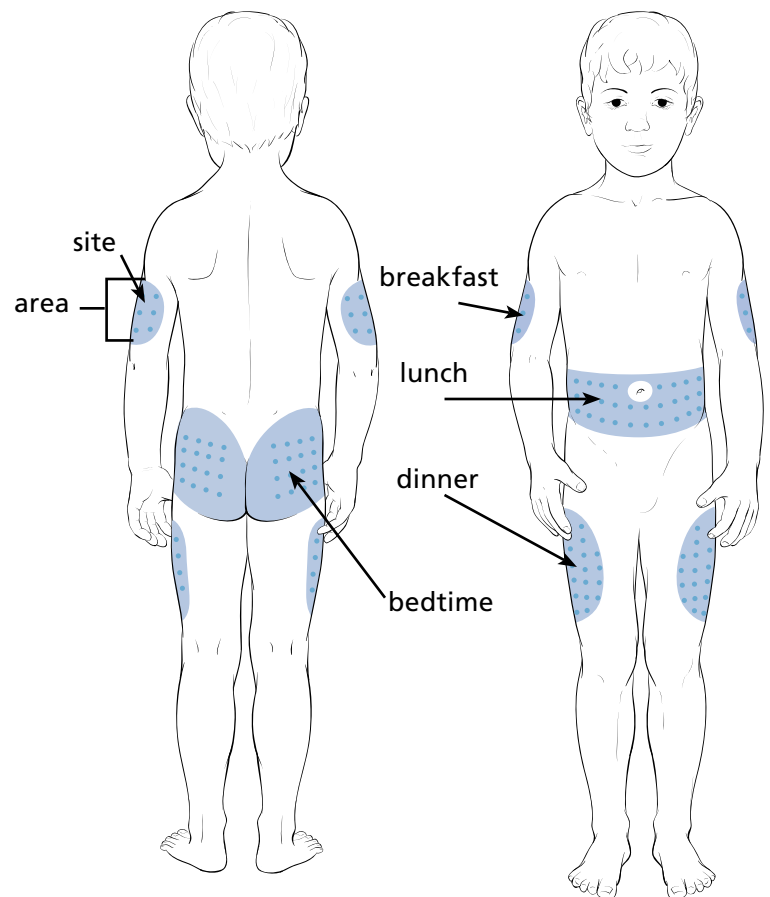
To give yourself a SUB-Q injection:

- 1 Wash your hands well with soap and warm water before grabbing your diabetes supplies. If you're using an injection pen, follow the steps on the right.
- 2 Pick an injection site, which should be different each time you give yourself insulin.
- 3 Draw up the right amount of insulin in the syringe, or dial in the dose on your pen. If you're using a syringe, wipe the top of the vial with alcohol first.
- 4 Pinch and lift about 1 inch of skin and fat with your thumb and forefinger.
- 5 To give the injection:
  - 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 injection button on the pen) all the way down. Slowly count to 10 before taking the needle out.
  - Put your finger over the injection site for 10 seconds before letting go. This helps stop any bleeding that may happen.

**Note:** It can take a bit longer for insulin to come out of a pen than a syringe. If insulin is dripping from the needle when you pull it out, you need to leave it in longer next time.

### If using a 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 is 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 to give an injection.** Then, remove the needle and put it in your needle disposal bin.



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