Subcutaneous Self injection of anti-coagulation treatment

Introduction
This leaflet provides information about how to self administer a daily subcutaneous injection you need following your operation when you are discharged from hospital. There is a small chance of developing a blood clot in the legs (DVT – deep vein thrombosis) or lungs (PE – pulmonary embolus) following your operation. The medicine given by daily injection helps to reduce the risk of a blood clot developing. The doctors will inform you when you are discharged from hospital how long you will need to have daily injections for, this can up to 28 days after surgery.

What is a subcutaneous injection?
A subcutaneous (sub = below, cutaneous – the skin) injection is giving medication using a needle and syringe into the fatty tissue just beneath the skin. The injection must be given to an area where there is enough of a fatty layer to ensure the medication can be given into the correct area easily.
Suitable areas include:
- Upper arm
- Buttocks
- Top of the thigh
- Abdomen

Why do I need an injection?
You have been asked to give yourself an injection because the medication cannot be given by mouth. The injection contains an ‘anticoagulant’, which means that it thins the blood slightly to reduce the chance of a blood clot forming after your surgery. Your doctor or nurse will discuss the dose you need with you, to give yourself before you are discharged home.

Are there any risks of subcutaneous injection?
Subcutaneous injections are very safe and most patients can manage to give the injections without any problems. Occasionally there may be discomfort, redness or swelling around the site where the injection is given. Very rarely patients can have an allergy to the medication, however if you develop a rash, bruising or unusual bleeding, use the contact numbers at the end of this leaflet to get further advice.

Why do I need to give myself an injection?
There are many benefits of giving your own injections. Injecting your own medication means that you can be in control and you can give the injection at the prescribed time, but in the comfort of your home without having to visit the doctor/nurse everyday or wait for the district nurse to visit you at home.
How do I prepare for my injection?
Everything that you will need will be given to you by the hospital ward when you are discharged home. You will need:

- A pre-filled syringe which already contains the medication with a needle attached
- A yellow sharps bin to safely put the needles into after they have been used.
- Gauze.

How do I inject myself?
1. Wash your hands with soap and warm water and dry with a clean towel.
2. Make sure you have your syringe with needle attached, the yellow bin and gauze.
3. Choose a suitable site for injection (the nurse will advise you of this before you are discharged)
4. Remove the cap from the needle.
5. Gently pinch up the skin into a fold using your thumb and index finger (to lift the fat layer away from the muscle.)
6. Holding the syringe the way you would hold a pen or pencil, insert the needle under the skin at a 90 degree angle to the pinched up skin (the needle should be completely covered by the skin).
7. Inject the medication slowly.
8. Once all the medication has been injected, keep the needle in place for five to ten seconds to ensure all the medication is absorbed
9. Remove the needle quickly and apply pressure to the site with gauze but do not rub.
10. Do NOT try to put the cap back on the needle and put the syringe into the yellow sharps bin straight away
11. Mark the date and time on the record sheet to show that you have taken the injection

Tips
- It is best for you to use a different injection site for each injection. For example if you use the left leg thigh for your first injection use the right leg thigh for your second.
- Give injections at least 1.5 inches (3cm) away from the last injection site
- If you are giving the injection into the thigh try to keep your leg muscles relaxed
- Try to keep the needle straight as it goes in and comes out.

Who can I contact if I need help?
Most patients can give the injections without any problems however if you experience any of the following:

- You are unable to give yourself the injection (for whatever reason)
- The injection site continues to bleed
- There is a lot of pain
- You inject the medication into the wrong area
- You get a rash
- You develop a fever (high temperature) or signs of an allergic reaction
- You develop pain or swelling in the legs, chest pain or breathing difficulties

Contact your hospital ward, GP or District Nurse

**Contact information**

Available 24 hours  
Ward 9  0191 4452009  
Treatment Centre Level 2  0191 4453005

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) can provide help, advice and support to patients, relatives or carers who have any questions or concerns regarding their health care. PALS are unable to give medical advice. You can contact PALS on free phone 0800 953 0667. Monday-Friday, 9.00am-5.00pm. An answer phone is available outside of these hours and calls will be returned the next working day.

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**Data Protection**

Any personal information is kept confidential. There may be occasions where your information needs to shared with other care professionals to ensure you receive the best care possible.

In order to assist us improve the services available your information may be used for clinical audit, research, teaching and anonymised for National NHS Reviews. Further information is available in the leaflet Disclosure of Confidential Information IL137, via Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust website or the PALS Service.

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