

Subcutaneous Self injection for anti-coagulation treatment

Introduction

This leaflet has been written to give you information about the daily injection you need following your operation.

There is a small chance of developing a blood clot (DVT – deep vein thrombosis, or PE – pulmonary embolus) following your operation and the medicine given by the injection helps to reduce the chance of a blood clot developing. The doctors recommend for you to continue to inject the medication for a total of 28 days after your operation.

What is a subcutaneous injection?

A subcutaneous injection is given 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 to the correct area easily.

Suitable areas include:

- Upper arm
- Buttocks
- Top of the thigh
- Abdomen (however after you have surgery and have abdominal wound we do not advise giving injection to this area until the wound has healed).

Why do I need the injection?

The injection contains a medication called heparin. This is an ‘anticoagulant’, which means that it thins the blood slightly to reduce the chance of a blood clot forming. The dose given depends upon your weight but is a small dose designed to prevent clots. Higher doses can be given if a blood clot is diagnosed or patients usually take medication to thin their blood for other health reasons. Your doctor or nurse will discuss the dose you need with you before you are discharged home.

Are there any risks of the 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. If this happens, let your doctor or district nurse know and they will advise you. Very rarely patients can have an allergy to the medication. This would usually be diagnosed in hospital before you are discharged but you should inform your doctor or nurse if you develop a rash, bruising or unusual bleeding. If any of these problems occur, contact your hospital nurse, doctor or GP for help and advice.

Do I need to give myself the injection?

There are many benefits of giving your own injections. Injecting your own medication means that you can be in control. 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 Ward 21 when you are discharged home. You will need:

- A pre-filled syringe which already contains the anti-coagulation medication with a needle attached
- A yellow sharps bin to safely put the needles after they have been used. Your doctor or nurse will take this away for you when you have finished the injections.

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 away from the muscle).
6. Holding the syringe the way you would hold a pen or pencil, insert the needle into the skin at a 90 degree angle to the pinched up skin (the needle should be completely inserted 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 but do not rub.
10. Do NOT try to put the cap back on the needle and put the syringe and needle 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

- We recommend 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 but if you did experience any problems contact Ward 21, your own doctor or district nurse 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 information

Ward 21 available 24hrs 0191 445 2021
0191 445 5921

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.

References

Dougherty, L . and Lister, S. (2011) The Royal Marsden Hospital Manual of Clinical Nursing Procedures. Eight Edition. Wiley and Blackwell. London

Acknowledgements April Jones Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals

Author Yvonne Anderson

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Data Protection

Any personal information is kept confidential. There may be occasions where your information needs to be 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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