



Low Molecular Weight Heparin

Instructions for Self Injection

What is Low Molecular Weight Heparin?

Low molecular weight heparin is a medication that prevents the blood from clotting quickly. It is used to prevent a blood clot from forming or to allow your body to break down the clot you already have. It is injected into the subcutaneous tissue (*i.e., the fatty tissue just under the skin*).



Find out more at:
www.ThrombosisBC.ca



It is important to check the medication for dose and expiry date.

DO NOT REFRIGERATE

Store the medication at room temperature.

* When travelling put in Carry-On baggage.

- 1 Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.



- 2 Choose an injection site. The sides and front of abdomen (*belly*) and outer thighs are good choices. Avoid the areas around the belly button and belt line. Inject at a different site each time. Never inject into an existing bruise or lump.



- 3 Wipe the area clean with an alcohol swab. While the alcohol dries, take the syringe out of its package and pull off the rubber cap. Don't worry about the small bubble in the syringe.



- 4 Pinch a fold of skin. Hold the syringe like a pen. Push the needle all the way into the skin at a 45 or 90 degree angle.



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Thrombosis Program

Vancouver Coastal Health, University of British Columbia

- 5 Put your index finger on the plunger and push it all the way down VERY slowly. Count to 10.



- 6 If you are using a spring-loaded prefilled safety syringe, you should hear a subtle "click" when the injection is done. Release your finger from the plunger and the needle will retract into the syringe. Then quickly release the pinch.



If you are not using a spring-loaded syringe, pull the needle out when the injection is finished. Release the pinch once the needle is out.

- 7 Apply firm pressure with a clean, dry cotton ball or clean tissue for **2 minutes** to prevent bruising. If you don't do this, large bruises or hematomas will form. **DO NOT RUB.**



- 8 Dispose of the syringe in a safety bin or sharps container. When container is full or you no longer need injections, please return it to the pharmacy for disposal.



Low molecular weight heparin is a medication that prevents the blood from clotting quickly.

How long do I take the injections for?

- If you are being treated for a blood clot in your leg or lungs, you need to do an injection every day for **at least** 5 days and until you are told to stop by the Thrombosis Clinic staff. Patients with cancer often require injections for longer periods of time.
- If you are doing injections around the time of surgery or other procedures, follow the instructions given to you.

What are the side effects of injections?

- Side effects are uncommon. Most patients will get a small bruise at the injection site. Patients who are allergic to the drugs will get a rash at the injection site. Report this immediately to the Thrombosis Clinic.
- Very rarely, some patients develop a very serious clotting condition called HIT (*heparin induced thrombocytopenia*) from the injections. The injection sites might turn black or deep red. Report this immediately to the Thrombosis Clinic.

When should I call the clinic or go to the Emergency?

- You should seek medical advice if you have any of the following problems:
 - Have bright red blood in your stool, urine or vomit
 - Have black, tarry, very foul smelling stools
 - Have sudden onset of a new, severe headache, especially if you are nauseated or drowsy
 - Injured your head (*even if minor*) or have had a bad fall
 - Swelling and severe pain in a joint
 - Have unexplained shortness of breath or chest pain
 - Sensation that your heart is racing or pounding, especially if you are dizzy
 - Have worsening pain and swelling in legs or arms