



## **Subcutaneous Injections**

## **Policies & Procedures**

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# SUBCUTANEOUS INJECTIONS

## Scope

### When

- Applies when clients are supported that require injectable medication via the subcutaneous

### Who

- Applies to all employees, supervisors and key management personnel supporting clients that require subcutaneous injections

## Purpose

While injectable medication has many healthcare benefits to clients, there are complexities associated with the prescribing, preparing, and administering this form of medication. This means there are greater risks than for other routes of administration. Safe systems of work are required to minimise the risks to ensure clients receive safe effective care.

This policy aims to ensure the safe administration of injectable drugs via the subcutaneous route.

## Subcutaneous injections

The subcutaneous route is used for a slow, sustained absorption of medication. Up to 1-2ml of drug/fluid is injected, slowly, into the subcutaneous tissue inserting the needle at a 45-degree angle into a raised skin fold in order to lift adipose tissue from underlying muscle. Aspiration following needle insertion is not required as risk of puncturing blood vessels is negligible.

The subcutaneous route is suitable for administering small doses of non-irritating water-soluble medication such as insulin or heparin.

## Injection site

The recommended sites to administer medication by subcutaneous are:

- The abdomen in the umbilical region
- The lateral or posterior aspect of the lower part of the upper arm
- The thighs (under the greater trochanter rather than the mid-thigh)
- Buttocks

If medicine is given frequently to the person via the subcutaneous route, rotate injection sites to decrease the likelihood of irritation and ensure improved absorption.

The injection site should be assessed before and after medication administration for signs and symptoms of possible difficulties including pain/tenderness, inflammation, bruising, oedema, hardness, heat, exudates/leaking, discharge, itching, burning, unresolved blanching and necrosis. Change the injection site immediately if any of these signs and symptoms are present.

A maximum volume of 2ml is tolerable using this route for injection. Only highly soluble drugs should be administered to prevent irritation.

A 25G needle is usually used to administer medication via subcutaneous.

## Subcutaneous needle size and gauge

Adult or child	Needle size	Technique
Adult	4-8mm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If you can grasp 5cm of tissue, insert needle at a 90° angle</li><li>• If you can grasp 2.5cm of tissue, insert needle at a 45° angle</li><li>• For shorter needles (less than 8mm) 90° is recommended</li></ul>
Child	4-6mm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 4mm needles are recommended for children aged 2-6 years with a lifted skin fold</li><li>• The need for lifted skin fold should be reviewed as the child grows</li></ul>

## Definitions

Term	Definition
Exudates	A mass of cells and fluid that seeps out of blood vessels or an organ, especially in inflammation
Lifted skin fold	Made using the thumb and index or middle finger to gently lift subcutaneous tissue away from the muscle layer. It is used to reduce the risk of intramuscular injection. Care should be taken not to pinch the skin and inadvertently also lift muscle tissue
Necrosis	Death of living tissue specifically-death of a portion of tissue differentially affected by local injury such as loss of blood supply, corrosion, burning, or the local lesion of a disease Oedema Accumulation of an excessive amount of watery fluid in cells, tissues, or serous cavities
Slough	Dead tissue separating from living tissue especially a mass of dead tissue separating from an ulcer

Subcutaneous	The layer between the skin (epidermis+dermis) and muscle which contains the fatty tissue which is ideal for the absorption of injectable medication such as insulin. Also called the subcutis
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## Subcutaneous injection general guidelines

- Ensure each client that requires SC injections receives relevant support proportionate to their individual needs and specific medication requirements
- When using a syringe, needle no longer than 8mm is recommended
- Syringes and pen needles are single use only
- Injections should not be administered through clothing
- Shorter length pen needles are recommended for adults and children

## Needle safety

- Never recap a used needle – recapping needles increases risk of needle stick injury
- Always dispose of used needles in a sharps approved container

## Employee responsibilities when supporting clients with subcutaneous injectable medications

- Work within their scope of practice and qualifications
- Wear appropriate PPE – gloves are not necessary (they don't protect from needle stick injury) but an apron is recommended to protect clothes
- Correct identity of the person they are to administer medication to using the persons medication chart
- Adhere to hand hygiene and injection control policies
- Choose an appropriate needle size and practice good administering techniques
- Report incidents via incident management system

## Key management personnel responsibilities when supporting clients with subcutaneous injectable medications

- Ensure employees have current knowledge and a training plan to teach the standards of care for clients that require subcutaneous injectable medications
- Provide employees education to provide excellent confident care
- Regularly audit subcutaneous injection practices
- Ensure employees follow the Administer Subcutaneous Medication process
- Ensure employees comply with the Medication policy

## Further Advice or Assistance

Further advice and information can be obtained from the:

» Complaints Handling Officer:

- by phoning: 07 4361 6848;
- by emailing: admin@123supports.com

## **Effectiveness and Review**

The Director will review this Policy and Procedures document each 12 months on the anniversary of its approval.