



SAFELY INJECTING TESTOSTERONE

Hormones are to be injected **into the thigh muscle for Intramuscular injections (IM) OR into the fatty layer of tissue just under the skin for Subcutaneous injections (SubQ)**. When injecting, be careful of nerves, veins, and bones. You can rotate injection sites to avoid bruises and sores. After you inject you might be sore for a day or two.

Do not inject more than the prescribed amount: it will not speed up your treatment process. You can cause serious liver damage and increase the risk of blood clots. Blood clots can appear in the veins of the legs and can travel to the lungs. This is called pulmonary embolism, which can be fatal. People who smoke cigarettes and inject hormones (especially estrogen) are more likely to develop pulmonary embolism.

Needles and syringes are to be used **one time only**. NEVER share your needles with anyone, ALL needles and syringes we prescribe are single use only.

If a new sterile syringe is not available the next time you inject, always clean it first. To clean your syringe, do the following: Rinse the syringe with water 3 times, bleach 3 times (keep bleach in syringe for at least 30 seconds and shake each time), and then rinse with water 3 times.

Preparing to give medication

Injections are not to be given if the skin is burned, hardened, inflamed, swollen, or damaged by a previous injection.

1. Wash your hands thoroughly. This is the best way to prevent infection.

2. Assemble your equipment:

- **Medication**

May be a multi-dose vial or single dose vial.

- **Subcutaneous Syringe and needle(s)**

Depending on the amount of medication to be given:

1.0 cc syringe with 25-gauge needle (5/8 of an inch long)

- **IM Injection Needles:**

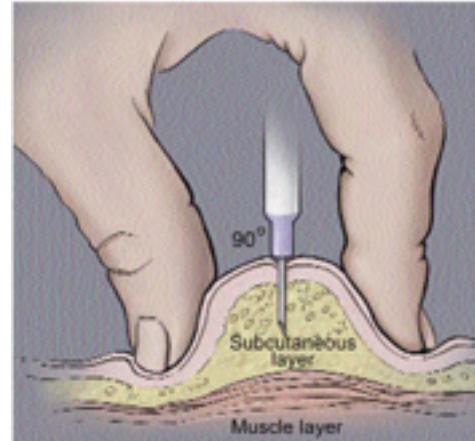
Draw Needle: 18x1/2 needle w/ 3cc syringe

Injection Needle: 22x1/2 needle w/ 3cc syringe

- Sharps container for syringe disposal (Gender Health Center can provide this to you)

- Sterile 2 x 2-inch gauze pad or cotton ball

- Alcohol pads



A subcutaneous injection into the fatty layer of tissue (pinched up to give the injection) under the skin.





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DRAWING UP MEDICATION:

When injecting hormones follow these helpful steps to avoid HIV and other serious infections:

1. Remove the soft metal or plastic cap protecting the rubber stopper of the vial. If the medication vial or pen can be used for more than one dose, record the date and time on the label.
2. Clean the exposed rubber stopper on the vial using an alcohol swab.
3. Remove the syringe from the plastic or paper cover. If necessary, attach the needle securely.
4. Pull back and forth on the plunger by grasping the plunger handle. Grasping the handle end will prevent contamination of the plunger shaft (which is sterile).
5. With the needle capped, pull back the plunger, filling the syringe with air equal to the amount of medication to be administered (eg. 1cc of air per 1cc of medication).
6. Remove the cap covering the needle and set it on its side to prevent contamination. **Be careful not to touch the needle.** The inside of the cap and needle is sterile, and the needle will be covered again with this cap.
7. With the vial in an up-right position, push the needle through the cleansed rubber stopper on the vial. Push the needle in at a 90 degree angle, being careful not to bend the needle.
8. Inject the air in the syringe into the vial. Air is injected into a multi-dose vial to prevent a vacuum from forming. If too little or no air is injected, withdrawing the medication may be difficult. If too much air is injected, the plunger may be forced out of the barrel causing the medication to spill.
9. Turn the vial upside down, with the needle remaining in the vial. The needle will be pointing upward.
10. Make sure that the tip of the needle is completely covered by the medication. This will make it easier to withdraw the solution (and not air).
11. Pull back on the plunger to fill the syringe with the correct dose of medication.
12. Keep the vial upside down, with the needle in the vial pointed upward. Tap the syringe, or "flick" it with your fingertips. This helps move bubbles to the top of the syringe.
13. Once the bubbles are at the top of the syringe, gently push on the plunger to force the bubbles out of the syringe and back into the vial.

Note: It is important to eliminate large air bubbles because they take up space needed for the medication, and they may cause pain or discomfort when injected.

14. After removing the bubbles, check the dose of medication in the syringe to be sure you have drawn up the correct amount.
15. After the medication is correctly drawn up, carefully replace the needle cap to prevent contamination. **Be careful not to touch the needle.**
16. If you are injecting subcutaneously, you are now ready to inject with the same needles you used to draw up the medication.
17. If you are doing intramuscular injections, you will now switch the needle to the smaller gauge for injecting into the muscle. Unscrew the 18 gauge needle from the syringe and dispose of it in your sharps container. Open the 25 gauge or (1 1/2) needle and attach it to your syringe without touching the needle.



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Now your syringe is filled with hormones. **Put the cap back on the needle while you choose and prepare the injection site.**

IM Injections

When you inject into your thigh, do it in the front area, between your hip and the knee.



SubQ Injections

Subcutaneous injections can be given in the arms, legs, or abdomen, however we recommend injecting into the abdomen as this gives the best absorption.

- To locate injection sites on the abdomen, place your hands on the lower ribs and draw an imaginary line between them. Use this area below your hands for injections, as far around as you can pinch up fatty tissue. Use an area within one hand's width around the naval. We have found the farther from the naval you inject the less irritation there is.

Preparing the skin

- Since the skin is the body's first defense against infection, it must be cleansed thoroughly before a needle is inserted.
- Cleanse the skin with a back-and-forth motion using an alcohol swab. This motion moves bacteria away from the injection site. Allow the alcohol to dry completely by air. Do not blow on the wet alcohol.





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GIVING THE INJECTION

1. Take the cover off the needle. **Be careful not to touch the needle.** Place the cover on its side.
2. Hold the syringe in one hand like pencil or a dart.
3. Grasp the skin between the thumb and index finger with your other hand and pinch up.
4. Quickly thrust the needle all the way into the skin. Do not “push” the needle into the skin slowly or thrust the needle into the skin with great force. Do not press down on the top of the plunger while piercing the skin.
5. Insert the needle at a 90-degree (right) angle for IM injections and 45-degree angle for SubQ. This angle is important to ensure that the medications will be injected into the fatty tissue/muscle.
6. After the needle is completely inserted into the skin, release the skin that you are grasping. Press down on the plunger to release medication into the subcutaneous layer in a slow, steady pace.
7. As the needle is pulled out of the skin, gently press a 2 x 2 gauze or cotton ball onto the needle insertion site. Pressure over the site while removing the needle prevents skin from pulling back, which may be uncomfortable. The gauze/ball also helps seal the punctured tissue and prevents leakage.
8. If instructed to do so, press or rub the site for a few seconds.
9. It is not serious if you notice blood at the site after the needle is removed. You may have nicked a surface blood vessel when you injected, and blood is following the needle track out to the surface. Simply press the site with a gauze pad/cotton ball. Also, a small amount of clear fluid may appear at the site. This may be medication that is following the needle track to the surface. Again, apply pressure using a gauze pad/ball.
10. A small amount of leaking of the hormones from the injection site is normal and nothing concerning.

Rotating Injection Sites (SubQ)

- It is **extremely important** to rotate sites to keep the skin healthy. Repeated injections in the same spot can cause scarring and hardening of fatty tissue that will interfere with absorption of medication. Each injection should be at least 1 inch apart.



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Safe needle disposal

- Place the syringe or needle in a hard plastic or metal container with a tightly secured lid. Sharps containers are distributed by Gender Health Center, please ask for one if you need.
- **You should not:**
 - Reuse syringes, needles, and vials
 - Share needles or syringes
 - Throw the syringes, needles in household trash
 - Recycle syringes, needles, and vials
 - Use a clear plastic or glass container for disposal
- Do not re-cap needles after use. Keep the container out of the reach of children or pets.
- When the container is three-quarters full, bring it back to Gender Health Center for proper disposal.
- Gender Health Center also distributes new, clean needles if you need, please ask staff if you need supplies.



Thank you for reading these instructions and learning how to safely inject yourself with medication. Gender Health Center staff is always here to help and support with any injection needs you might have. Please do not hesitate to contact us.

Gender Health Center also performs **FREE Rapid HIV tests that take 20 min.** If you feel you have gotten exposed please walk-in for a test or call for an appointment.

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