



# Subcutaneous Injections

## Introduction

While injectable medication has many healthcare benefits to participants, 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 participants 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 1-2 ml 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 2 ml 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	4-8 mm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● If you can grasp 5 cm of tissue, insert needle at a 90° angle.</li><li>● If you can grasp 2.5 cm of tissue, insert needle at a 45° angle.</li><li>● For shorter needles (less than 8mm), 90° is recommended).</li></ul>



child	4-6 mm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 4 mm 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>
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## Applicability

When
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Applies when participants are supported that require injectable medication via the subcutaneous route.</li></ul>

Who
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Applies to all employees, supervisors and key management personnel supporting participants that require subcutaneous injections</li></ul>

## Documents relevant to this policy

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Subcutaneous injections (easy read)</li></ul>
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## Regulations relevant to this policy

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● NDIS (Quality Indicators) Guidelines 2018 (Cth)</li></ul>
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## Subcutaneous injection general guidelines

As a guide:

- Ensure each participant requiring subcutaneous injection receives relevant support proportionate to their individual needs and specific medication requirements
- When using a syringe, a needle no longer than 8 mm is recommended
- Syringes and pen needles are single use only
- Injections should not be administered through clothing
- Shorter length pen needs 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.

## Worker responsibilities when supporting participants with subcutaneous injectable medications

Responsibilities of workers are to:



- 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
- Correctly identify the person they are to administer medication to using the person's 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 participants with subcutaneous injectable medications**

Responsibilities of key management personnel are to:

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