

FENWAY  HEALTH

Safer Hormone Injection Guide

What Are the Risks?

If you are injecting your own hormones, it is important to know what's safe and what's not. Here's what you need to know about the risks:

- **Sharing needles and syringes** with other people can give you a serious disease like HIV or Hepatitis C. Hepatitis C is a virus that can cause liver failure and liver cancer.
- **Re-using needles and syringes**, even your own, can give you an infection and make you sick.



- **Injecting the wrong way** can damage your muscles and nerves.
- **Using hormones from the Internet, the street, or a friend is illegal and very dangerous.** These hormones can be the wrong dose, expired, contaminated, or fake. Taking them can be dangerous, and even put you in the hospital.

How Can I Be Safer?

Here's what you can do to stay safer when injecting your own hormones:



- **Use new needles and syringes every time you inject.** This is the most important thing you can do to keep yourself from getting sick!
 - If you feel you must re-use your needles and syringes, clean them well with bleach.
 - If you are tempted to use someone else's needle... stop and think—*Is risking my lifeworth it? Can I wait?*

- **Find a local Needle Exchange Program** to get free needles, syringes, bleach kits, and sharps boxes. You can also buy needles and syringes at a pharmacy and some clinics.



**How to Inject Hormones:
Step-by-Step** ➤ ➤ ➤ ➤

1

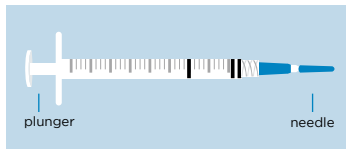
Gather Your Supplies



Hormone medication
Check the expiration date, dosage and concentration of your medication.



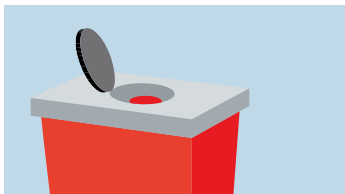
A second needle to inject the hormones
It's safer and more comfortable to use a new needle to inject. Ask your healthcare provider, pharmacist, or needle exchange to help you choose the right size needles and syringes



A new syringe and needle to "draw up" the hormones



Alcohol wipes or pads, or rubbing alcohol. You may also want a gauze or bandage for after the injection.

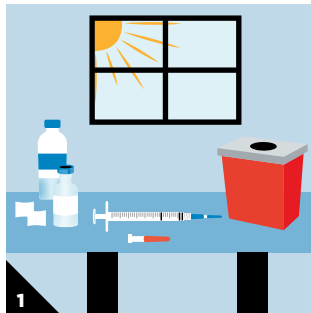


A sharps box for safely throwing away needles and syringes

You can get a sharps box at a needle exchange or a pharmacy. You can also use a hard plastic detergent bottle or milk jug. It is illegal in Massachusetts to put sharps in the trash or recycling.

2

Get Ready



Find a clean space with lots of light to set up your equipment.



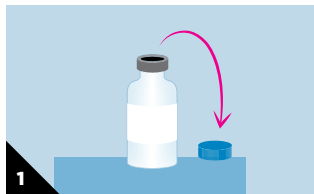
Wash your hands, and the area where you will inject, with soap and warm water. If you don't have access to a sink, use an alcohol based gel to clean your hands. This is really important for keeping you healthy!



Hold the medicine bottle up to the light. If the medicine looks cloudy, or there are bits floating in it, do not use it. Check the expiration date and dose again to be sure.

3

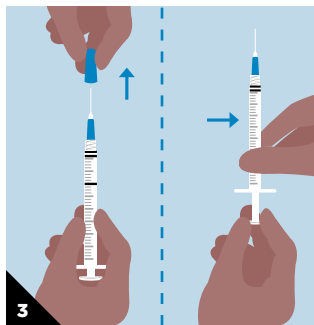
Draw Up



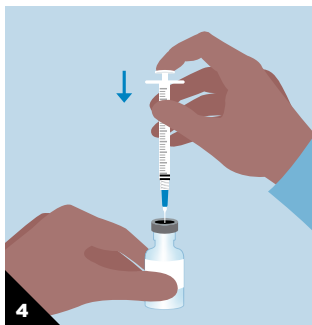
Take the cap off the bottle. Put the bottle on a flat surface. Clean the rubber stopper with an alcohol wipe for 10-15 seconds.



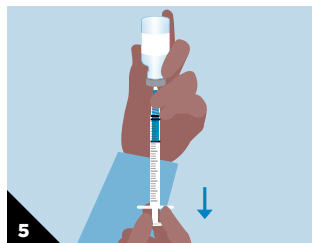
Clean the injection area with an alcohol wipe. Or, pour alcohol over the area. Clean the area in a circular pattern, from the center moving out.



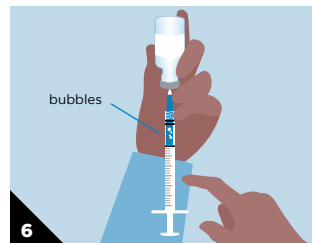
Pull the needle cover straight off the syringe. Pull back the plunger to the number on the syringe that matches your dose.



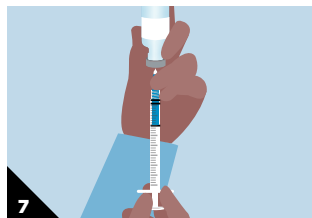
Insert the needle straight down into the center of the bottle. Push the plunger of the syringe all the way down.



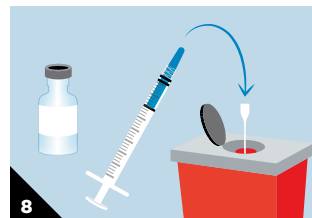
Turn the bottle upside down. Slowly pull back the plunger to fill the syringe with the medication. Check that you have the right dose.



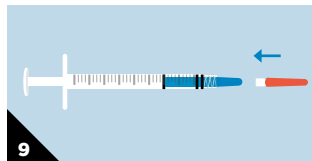
Gently tap the syringe with your fingers until the larger air bubbles rise to the top. Slowly push the plunger up a little to force the large air bubbles out.



After air bubbles are gone, pull the plunger back to the number on the syringe that matches your medication dose.



Pull the syringe and needle out of the bottle. Carefully remove the needle from the syringe. Put the needle in the sharps box.



Place a new injection needle on the syringe. Twist the syringe slightly to prevent leakage. Remove the cap from the needle.

4

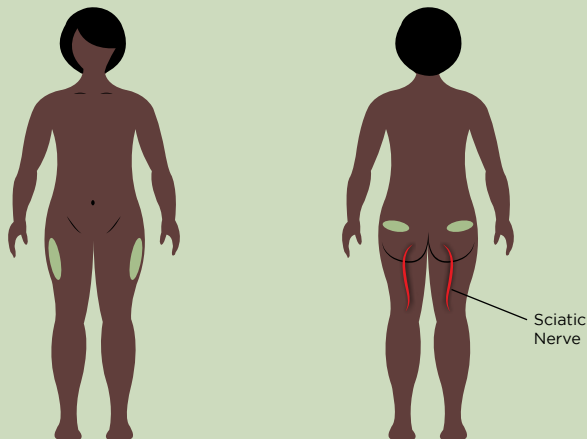
Choose Injection Site

There are two ways to inject hormones:

Intramuscular (IM) and **Subcutaneous (SubQ)**

Intramuscular (IM) Injections

- IM injections use a longer needle and go deep into the muscle.
- IM injections can go in the thighs or buttocks.
- To avoid pain and scarring, do not inject in the same spot over and over.

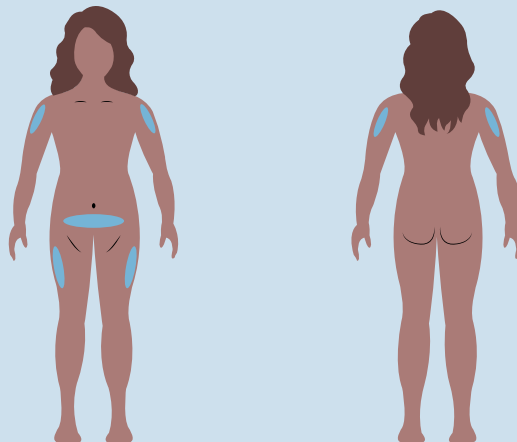


Aim for halfway between your knee and your hip on the outer part of the thigh. This is the preferred injection site for IM injections for most people.

Aim for where the top of a pants back pocket would be. This will help you **avoid hitting the sciatic nerve**, which can cause serious pain and injury.

Subcutaneous (SubQ) Injections

- SubQ injections use a shorter needle and go just under the skin.
- SubQ injections can go in the thighs, stomach, or upper arms.
- To avoid pain and scarring, do not inject in the same spot over and over.



For the stomach, avoid the belly button or bony areas. For the thighs, aim for halfway between your knee and your hip on the outer part of the thigh.

You can inject in the side or the back of the upper arms. Aim for the area that is below the shoulder and above the elbow.

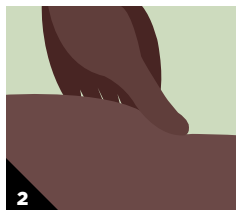
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Inject

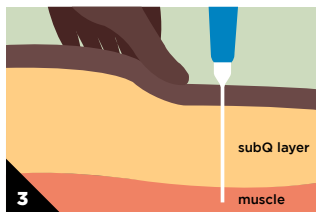
IM Injections



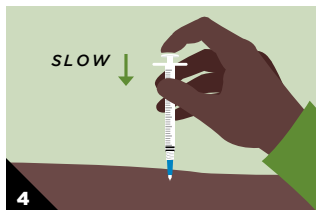
If you can't get to a sink, you can clean the injection area with an alcohol wipe. Or, pour alcohol over the area. Clean the area in a circular pattern, from the center moving out.



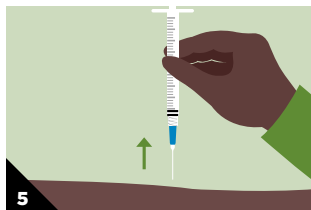
Stretch the skin tight, away from the injection site.



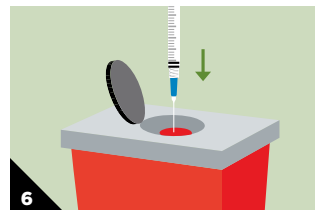
Quickly and firmly stick the needle straight through the skin and into the muscle. **CAUTION! If you feel extreme pain when you inject, you probably hit a nerve. Remove the needle right away!**



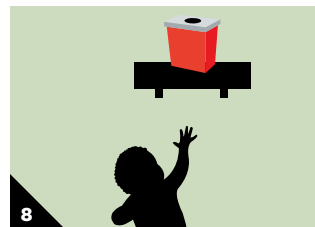
Slowly push the plunger to inject the hormones. Wait 5 seconds. You can now let go of the skin.



Pull back on the syringe to remove the needle from your skin. Carefully put the needle and syringe into your sharps box. If you are bleeding, gently press a clean tissue or cotton ball on the spot. Use a bandage, if needed.



Wash your hands with water and soap.



Cap your sharps box and keep it away from children. When your sharps box is full, bring it to a Needle Exchange Program or AIDS Action Committee.

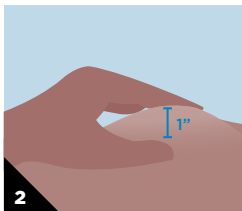
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Inject

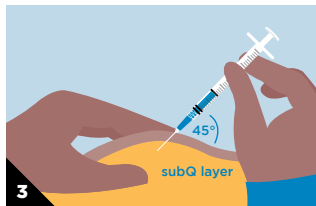
SubQ Injections



If you can't get to a sink, you can clean the injection area with an alcohol wipe. Or, pour alcohol over the area. Clean the area in a circular pattern, from the center moving out.

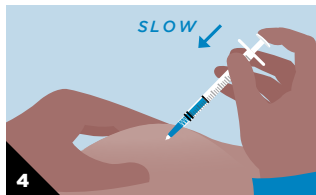


Pinch an inch of skin at the injection site.

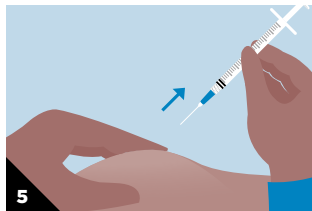


Quickly and firmly insert the needle just under the skin. You can insert the needle straight up and down, or at an angle.

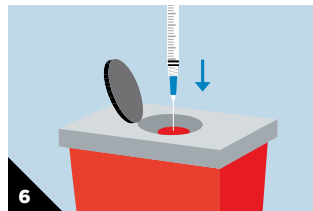
CAUTION! If you feel extreme pain when you inject, you probably hit a nerve. Remove the needle right away!



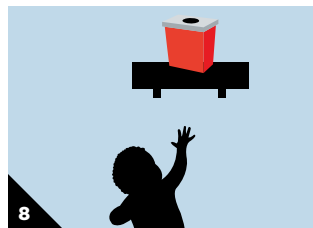
Slowly push the plunger to inject the hormones. Wait 5 seconds.



Pull back on the syringe to remove the needle from your skin. Carefully put the needle and syringe into your sharps box. If you are bleeding, gently press a clean tissue or cotton ball on the spot. Use a Band-Aid if needed.



Wash your hands with water and soap.



Cap your sharps box and keep it away from children. When your sharps box is full, bring it to a Needle Exchange Program or AIDS Action Committee.

How Can I Reduce Pain and Injury?

- Keep your body warm and relaxed.
- Keep medicine at room temperature.
- Break through the skin quickly with the needle.
- Pull the needle straight out without changing direction or wiggling.
- Do not inject in the same spot over and over again.
- Do not massage the site.

When Should I Call a Doctor?

See a doctor or other health care provider right away if...

- an injection site is red, hot, swollen, and/or leaking pus
- you think you hit a nerve and it continues to be painful or numb
- you have a fever
- you are worried about anything that seems unusual

Safety Reminders

- Always use new needles and syringes.
- Never share needles or syringes.
- Never inject silicone.
- Get your hormones from a health care provider.
- Follow these safe injection instructions.

What about Pumping Silicone?

Pumping silicone is sometimes used to create affirming changes to the body such as curves or fullness of the lips or buttocks, but It can also have devastating effects:

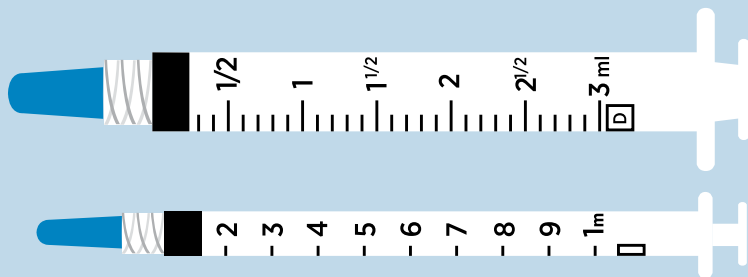
- **Silicone can destroy the skin and muscle and cause painful scars.** It can also cause lifelong swelling and soreness.
- **If the silicone gets into your bloodstream,** it can travel to your lungs or brain and cause serious illness, even death.
- **Did you know that the silicone used at pumping parties may not be medical grade?** Often it's the stuff used for machinery! And it can be mixed with all sorts of other liquids, like mineral oil or even transmission fluid. These can cause real harm to your body.
- **If you feel you absolutely must pump silicone,** at least make sure you use new needles. Never re-use the needles and syringes you use for your hormones.

How Else Can I Be Safer?

- **Get your hormone medications from a doctor or other health care provider.**



- **Get tested for HIV and Hepatitis C.**
- **Learn how to inject safely.** Read this booklet for step-by-step instructions or talk to your doctor.
- **For help with finding health insurance, supportive resources, and trans-friendly doctors, contact your care team or the Trans Health Program:**
transhealth@fenwayhealth.org | 857.313.6589
fenwayhealth.org/transhealth



Notes

You will be using a ____g needle to draw up your medication, and a ____g needle to administer.

Your dose as of _____ is ____ml using a ____mg/ml bottle. Be sure to always administer the correct dose.

If you have questions, call _____.

- **Use a dose calculator** to figure out how much of your medicine (volume) to inject.



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Fenway Health is a nationally recognized leader in gender affirming care. We conduct research and provide direct care, education, and advocacy. Please consider supporting Fenway's Gender Affirming Care efforts.

