

Subcutaneous Injection

● SKILL SNAPSHOT

Purpose

- Delivers a small medication volume into adipose tissue for slower, sustained absorption.

When to use

- Common for insulin, heparin, selected vaccines, biologics, and other medications ordered by the subcutaneous route.

Supplies needed

- MAR/order; medication; appropriate syringe and short needle/pen; alcohol or CHG swab per policy; gloves; gauze; sharps container.

● PREP + PATIENT SETUP

- Verify medication rights, allergies, indication, dose, concentration, timing, and required assessments.
- Inspect and rotate sites; assess bruising, scars, lipohypertrophy, infection, edema, and skin

● VAULT TIP

- Site rotation prevents tissue damage and unpredictable absorption. Map the abdomen or thighs instead of choosing randomly.

● STEP-BY-STEP

1. Hand hygiene; identify patient with two identifiers; explain medication and expected effects.
2. Compare medication with MAR/order at required checkpoints. Perform calculations and independent double-checks when required.
3. Prepare exact dose aseptically. For insulin, use the matching insulin syringe/pen and concentration.
4. Position patient and expose only the selected site. Rotate within the prescribed site pattern.
5. Apply gloves. Clean skin with approved antiseptic using friction; allow it to dry completely.
6. Gently pinch a fold of subcutaneous tissue unless the device or medication instructions say otherwise.
7. Hold syringe like a dart. Insert at 45 degrees when tissue is thin or needle is longer; use 90 degrees when tissue depth and needle length support it.
8. Release pinch if appropriate while keeping needle stable.
9. Inject medication slowly and steadily. Do not aspirate for routine subcutaneous injections.
10. Wait briefly as recommended for the medication/device, then withdraw needle at the same angle.
11. Apply gentle pressure with gauze if needed. Do not massage heparin or insulin sites.
12. Activate safety device immediately and discard syringe/needle intact in sharps container. Do not recap.
13. Inspect site, reassess patient response, and provide medication-specific teaching.

● SAFETY REMINDERS

- Never inject into bruised, scarred, inflamed, infected, edematous, or lipohypertrophic tissue.
- Verify medication-specific volume, needle, angle, and site guidance.
- Use independent double-checks for insulin/heparin per policy.
- Do not recap, bend, or detach used needles.

● COMMON MISTAKES

- Using an insulin syringe with the wrong concentration.
- Failing to rotate sites.
- Injecting before antiseptic dries.
- Massaging after heparin or insulin.

● DOCUMENTATION

- Medication, dose, route, time, and site.
- Glucose/labs or other pre-assessment.
- Site condition and rotation location.
- Patient response and adverse effects.
- Teaching and notifications.