

Low Molecular Weight Heparin

The leaflet aims to answer your questions about taking low molecular weight heparin (LMWH) for the treatment and prevention of blood clots. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is LMWH?

LMWH is an anticoagulant which increases the time your blood takes to clot. This reduces the risk of developing or extending a blood clot in the body. LMWH starts to work within two hours of being injected.

If LMWH is prescribed for a short period of time then no additional monitoring is needed. LMWH treatment given in pregnancy is often monitored by a blood test whereas prophylaxis (preventative doses) is not monitored.

Your platelet count will be monitored by a blood test as needed.

How do I take the medicine?

It is usually given by subcutaneous injection once daily which means it is injected beneath the skin, but in some situations your doctor or nurse may recommend that you have two injections a day.

To give yourself a LMWH injection, you need:

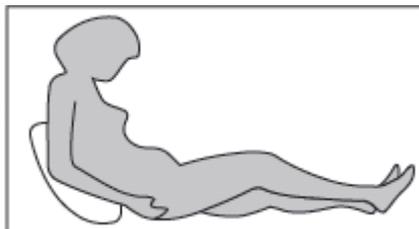
- pre-loaded syringes
- sharps bin
- clean tissue.

1. Washing hands and skin preparation



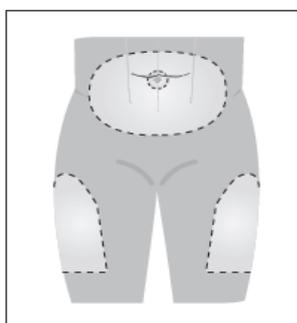
Wash your hands carefully with soap and water and clean the injection site.

2. Position



Get yourself in a comfortable sitting down position where you can see your stomach. Have your syringe, tissue and sharps bin near you.

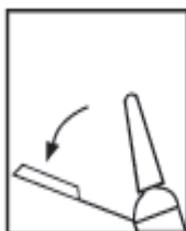
3. Area to give injection



The injection should be given into fat. Choose an injection site in either the outer aspect of the thigh or abdomen.

You should avoid the navel (belly button). It is important that you change the site each time.

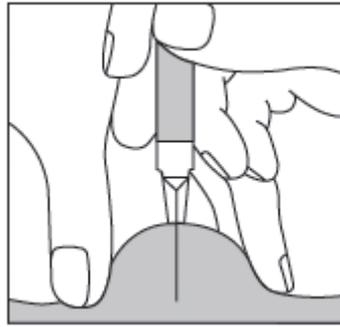
4. Taking off the cap and how to deal with the air bubble



Pick up the syringe, grasp the tip of the plastic needle catcher and bend it away from the shield.

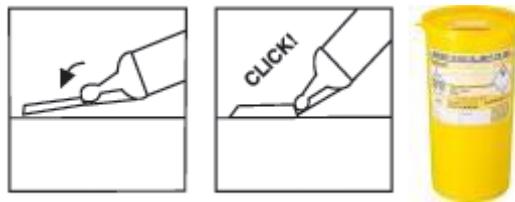
- Remove the grey rubber cover by pulling it.
- You will notice an air bubble in the syringe.
- Do not attempt to remove this as it helps to deliver the medicine into the fat.

5. Giving the injection



- Pinch a big fold of skin at the chosen injection site.
- Hold the syringe like a pencil or a dart and fully insert the needle at an angle of 90° (a right angle).
- Press the plunger slowly until all the contents of the syringe have been injected.
- Keep pinching the fold of skin while you are injecting and then release the fold of skin and pull out the needle.
- Do not rub the injection site as this may cause bruising.

6. Disposal of the syringe



Place the plastic catcher against a hard stable surface and with one hand pivot the syringe barrel upwards against the needle forcing the needle into the catcher where it locks in place.

Continue bending the needle until the syringe makes an angle of more than 45 degrees with the flat surface.

Do not attempt to replace the cap over the needle.

Place the empty syringe in a sharps bin. **Never** put the needle in your household rubbish.

Bring the yellow sharps bin to the hospital at your next visit where it will be disposed of safely.

What should I do if I forget to take the medicine?

If you miss an injection please seek medical advice.

Are there any side effects?

You may feel a **stinging** sensation after the injection which lasts for a few minutes. Sometimes the injection site will **ooze blood or watery fluid**. Press on it with a clean tissue until it stops.

You may experience **bruising** at the injection site. If you are also taking aspirin then any bruising may be more noticeable. If you are concerned about the amount of bruising contact the telephone number below.

You will **bleed** more easily because your blood will take longer to clot than normal. In rare cases, patients have an allergic reaction at the injection site, causing redness or itching.

Some patients on prolonged treatment with other forms of heparin have experienced **osteoporosis** (a condition that weakens bones). This usually reverses when the treatment is stopped. This is not likely to happen with LMWH.

Is there anything else I need to know?

You should keep the injections at room temperature but avoid storing them in direct sunlight or near a radiator.

How do I get a repeat prescription?

You can get your repeat prescription from your clinic.

Useful sources of information

Medisa is a free service for medicine and clinical information and patient information.

www.medisa.com

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about LMWH, please contact the anticoagulant and thrombosis service on 020 8725 1332 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). Out of hours, please contact 020 8672 1255 and ask for the on-call haematology registrar.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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