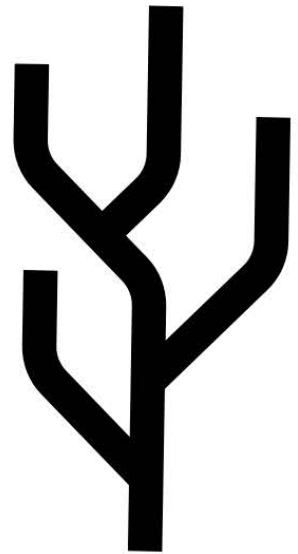


VEIN CARE



VEIN FLOW / VEIN CARE

Types of injecting

- Intravenous (IV): Into a vein
- Intramuscular (IM): Into a muscle
- Subcutaneous (SC): Under the skin, skin popping

When it comes to wound prevention, IV is safer than IM or SC

- In general, injecting IV instead IM or SC is less risky for injection-related infections
- This is because the vein acts as a “chute” or a tube for the liquid drug to run through the system, straight to the heart
- It may be easier to overdose injecting IV (more than IM or SC) because the body will feel the effects faster
- IM or SC injection have greater chances of bacterial-related infections under the skin—from the drug and what it’s cut with

Veins + arteries

- Veins carry blood to the heart
 - Vein blood is dark red or purple
 - Inject in the veins in the direction of the heart
- Arteries carry blood away from the heart
 - The pressure in arteries is much higher than in veins
 - Artery blood is bright red and frothy

- Arteries have a pulse—do not inject into an artery. Do not inject into a pulse

When you hit a vein, dark red blood will appear in the barrel.

If the blood is bright red or gushing you've probably hit an artery.

You may have hit an artery if:

- you feel a sudden cramping pain as the needle touches the artery
- the plunger pops out as you try to inject (this is because of the high blood pressure in the artery)

If you hit an artery:

- Release the tourniquet and pull the needle out immediately
- Raise your limb above your head to stop the bleeding, if possible
- Apply firm pressure to the wound for at least 10 minutes
- If bleeding continues, apply a bandage or cloth wrapped very tightly around the wound and seek medical attention ASAP
- The loss of blood from hitting an artery can be life-threatening if it's not stopped

Tips for finding veins

- Gently palpitate a vein
 - Find the vein
 - Put a finger on it and keep the finger on it
 - GENTLY start pressing up and down with a slight bouncing action

- After about 20–30 seconds you should notice the vein has expanded slightly

➤ Gravity

- Try lying on a bed or sofa with the arm you want to inject with hanging down over the side. This should increase the amount of blood in that arm, and as a result the veins will appear bigger
- Another way of using gravity is using centrifugal force. The easiest way to do that is to spin your arm around like a windmill. The force on your arm will mean blood still enters but has problems getting back out.

➤ Exercise

- Run or jump in place
- Try arm curls with a dumbbell or can of food
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Pro tips

- Drink lots of water—staying hydrated helps boost blood circulation
- Put a warm compress or warm towel where you are going to inject
- Avoid vaping or smoking a cigarette right before you inject—nicotine makes your veins shrink

Tourniquets

- A tourniquet is used to restrict blood flow.
- The material used as a tourniquet should be easy on the skin and have elasticity
- A tourniquet should be easy to remove with your mouth or one hand
- Tourniquets pose infection risk if splashed with blood and should be sterilized if reused.
- Use latex tourniquets when you can
- Avoid using leather or porous material that can absorb and hold on to blood
- If you don't have access to latex tourniquets, try stretching out a non-lubricated condom or latex glove

Technique

- Tie off 2 inches above injection site to increase the size of the vein to improve injection accuracy
- Insert the needle at an angle (no more than 45 degrees) with the hole of the needle facing upwards
- Pull back the plunger. Dark red blood should appear. This means you're into a vein
- Loosen the tourniquet and gently push the plunger
- Pull the needle out in the same direction you put it in.
- Apply pressure for a couple of minutes with a clean tissue or cotton
- Do not use an alcohol swab: this can stop the blood from clotting and increase bleeding

Missed hits

- If you don't see blood in the barrel after you flag/register, you're not in a vein. Pull the needle out, remove the tourniquet and apply pressure
- You may feel some pain and swelling where you've injected
- Missed shots increase the risk of infection
- Seek medical advice if the area gets hot, painful, swollen or red

Injection sites on the body vary in risk

- The safer location to inject IV will be in your arms.
- Try arms because other parts of the body have higher risk complications.
- Learn how to inject in both arms before learning how to inject in the hands, wrist, feet, groin, or jugular (neck vein)

Injection sites on the body by risk, from safer to higher-risk

1. Arms
2. Legs or hands
3. Feet or wrists
4. Groin
5. Neck

Arms

- The least dangerous place to inject is inside the elbow

- Try to avoid hitting the same spot over and over
- This supports vein care and also makes it easier to get high
- Switch veins – there are multiple veins in your arm
- Switch arms – learning to inject in your other arm will provide many more potential injection sites
- Move further up the vein towards the heart (aka “up the arm”)
 - When you inject you create a small puncture wound. If you inject further down the vein away from the heart the drugs will pass through the earlier injection site which can cause the site to heal more slowly
 - If you inject up the vein towards the heart it gives the earlier injection down the arm a chance to heal
- Give veins a chance to rest
 - Especially if they are red or tender

Legs

- Veins in the legs are more likely to develop clots than those in the arms and this can seriously mess with blood circulation
- Injecting below the knee increases risk
- Damaging the valves in the leg veins can be more serious than damaging those in the arms since leg veins play a greater role in getting blood back to the heart
- Inject in the direction of the heart, so that would be UP the leg

Hands

- The veins in the hands are very small, sensitive and are easily damaged or split
- Collapsed veins can result in puffy hands that are cold due to poor circulation
- Swollen fingers can have their circulation cut off by rings
- Make sure you take all your rings off if you are injecting into your hands
- If you do inject into one of these small veins – where the blood can only flow slowly – you can reduce the risk of a split vein by injecting as slowly
- For hand injection, try a smaller gauge (that would be a higher number like 30, 32)
 - Use a butterfly needle if you can find one
- Take extra care to clean skin before injecting in the hand—most disease transmission occurs by the hands
- Circulation is slower in the hands and it will take longer for an abscess or sore to heal

Wrists

Wrists are high-risk

- Avoid the wrist if you inject in the hand
- There are lots of nerves and small, easier-to-miss veins near the wrist.

Feet

- As with the hands, veins in the feet are generally smaller, and closer to nerves, cartilage, and tendons—all of which you want to avoid hitting when injecting
- Because feet are so far away from the heart, blood circulates more slowly in the foot, and it requires more time for healing
- Injecting in the feet gets problematic surrounding hygiene, dirt, maybe not wearing shoes, lots of bacteria, and being so close to the ground
- Take extra care to clean skin with alcohol wipe before injecting. Wipe the alcohol pad in one direction, instead of back and forth, so you don't swirl bacteria around
- Make sure bleeding is stopped before putting shoe or sock back on

Neck and groin

- The carotid and femoral veins are very close to their arteries in the neck and groin
- Compromising these arteries can result in stroke, brain damage, and death
- Angle of the syringe is important
- Good lighting is key
- Use a mirror if you don't have a good view of the injection site
- For the neck, seal your mouth and puff up air and hold it—this can pump up the vein

