

Low Molecular Weight Heparin

What is this medicine used for?

Low molecular weight heparin is a blood thinner injected under the skin into fatty tissue. It is used to prevent or treat blood clots.

Common Examples

- Enoxaparin (Lovenox[®])
- Dalteparin (Fragmin[®])

Why do I need a blood thinner?

It may be used to prevent blood clots or used to treat an existing clot. Some risk factors that may cause blood clots are listed below.

- Stroke
- Atrial fibrillation
- Heart failure
- Heart valve replacement
- Treat or avoid DVT (deep vein thrombosis) – blood clot in a deep vein, often in the leg
- Treat or avoid PE (pulmonary embolism) – blood clot in the lung

How long will I need to take this for?

Your doctor will tell you how long to take this medicine.

Who shouldn't use this medicine?

Patients who are actively bleeding, have a low platelet count, or have a history of a bleeding disorder **shouldn't** use heparin unless under the care of a doctor. Patients with an allergy to heparin, pork, preservatives, or dyes should talk with a doctor before using heparin.

What side effects should I watch for?

It is common to have soreness, mild bruising, pain, or redness at the injection site.

When should I go to the emergency room?

- Blood in your urine
- Red, black or tar-like stool
- Cough up or vomit blood (bright red or looks like coffee grounds)
- Chest pain or feeling short of breath
- Sudden shortness of breath
- Severe bruising
- Any bleeding you cannot stop
- Severe stomach pains
- Severe headache
- Fall and hit your head
- Weakness on one side of body or slurred speech

How do I store my medicine?

Keep it at room temperature, away from heat and light. **Don't** put it in a refrigerator or freezer.

What should I do with sharps waste?

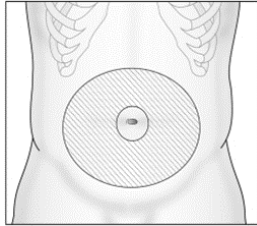
Sharps waste cannot be thrown away with your trash or recycling. Obtain or purchase a "Sharps Box" from your pharmacy, hospital, clinic or health department. You may also use a hard, plastic liquid laundry soap or bleach bottle with a screw on lid. If you choose this option, you will need to get a biohazard sticker.

Ask your pharmacy or doctor's office if they are a disposal site. To find disposal sites in your area, look online at

<http://www.safeneedledisposal.org>

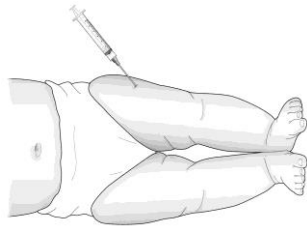
Steps for Giving Your Shot

- 1 Wash your hands with soap and water. Then dry them.
- 2 Remove the prefilled syringe dose from the package.
- 3 Choose a site on your belly at least 2 inches away from your belly button. You may use either side of your belly. Avoid any scars, bruises, or swollen areas. You should use a different place each time you give yourself a shot.



For children less than 1 year old:

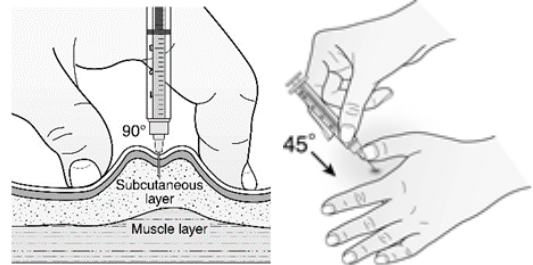
Inject the medicine into the upper outer side of the thigh. Don't inject into the stomach.



- 4 Clean the area where you will give the shot with an alcohol pad or soap and water. Let it dry.
- 5 Sit in a relaxed position so you can reach your belly and see the place where you will give your shot.
- 6 Pull the cap straight off the needle. Keep the needle sterile once you have removed the cap. **Don't** set the needle down or touch the needle.
(If you notice an air bubble in the syringe, it is still safe to use.)

- 7 Hold the syringe like a pencil in the hand that you write with. With your other hand, pinch the area you cleaned between your thumb and fingers to make a fold in the skin. Be sure to hold the skin fold until the injection is done.

Insert the needle into the skin fold, holding the syringe at a 90° angle. If you have very little fatty tissue or are using longer needles, you may need to inject at a 45° angle (see pictures below). Ask your health care team what is best for **you**.



- 8 Press down on the plunger until all the medicine has been pushed out under the skin and the syringe is empty. Pull the syringe with the needle straight out of the skin fold. Let go of the skin fold. Don't rub the site. Rubbing may bruise the site or affect how the medicine is absorbed.
- 9 After the needle is removed from the skin, push down on the plunger a second time to make the safety device work. A hard cover should appear over the needle.
- 10 Dispose of the used syringe into a sharps container (a hard plastic container). Close the lid and keep the container away from children and pets.

Blood Clots or Stroke

The medicine you are taking is often used to stop or treat blood clots or to prevent a stroke. You should still be aware of the signs and symptoms of blood clots and strokes.

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

DVT is a blood clot that occurs in the leg or arm. Symptoms include:

- Pain or tenderness in limb.
- Swelling or redness in limb.
- Skin warm to touch.

Pulmonary Embolism (PE)

PE is a type of blood clot in the lung. Symptoms include:

- Chest pain
- Feeling short of breath
- Cough (with or without blood)
- Fast breathing
- Fast heart rate
- Low grade fever or mild sweating

Stroke

Symptoms of a stroke include a sudden onset of:

- A headache (described as the worst headache you ever had).
- Changes in vision.
- Feeling weak on one side of the body.
- Slurred speech or trouble speaking.
- Confusion.

What should I do if I noticed symptoms of a blood clot or stroke?

If you have symptoms of a blood clot or stroke, this is a medical emergency, and you should **call 911 right away**.

Resources

UW Health - Anticoagulation Services
<http://www.uwhealth.org/anticoagulation>

Clot Care Online Resource
<http://www.clotcare.com>

National Blood Clot Alliance
<http://www.stoptheclot.org>

Quiz

1. For which of these symptoms should you seek emergency care?
 - a. Cough up or vomit blood
 - b. Severe headache or stomachache (worst in your life)
 - c. Weakness on one side of body or slurred speech
 - d. All of the above
2. How far away from your belly button should you inject the medicine?
 - a. At least 2 inches away
 - b. At least 6 inches away
 - c. It is ok to inject it directly on the belly button
3. Where should you place used needles?
 - a. Garbage
 - b. Sharps container
 - c. Recycling
4. Where should you dispose of sharps containers?
 - a. Garbage
 - b. Recycling
 - c. At an approved sharps disposal site, often at a local pharmacy

(Quiz answers 1. d, 2. a, 3. b, 4. C)

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 5/2023 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6915