

Injecting yourself with medication to produce more white blood cells



Your doctor has prescribed a medicine to stimulate the growth of your white blood cells (e.g. Neupogen, Grastofil, Filgrastim). This fact sheet explains how to inject it yourself.

Why do I need to take this medication?

This medication is a “hematopoietic growth factor” (e.g., Neupogen, Grastofil, Filgrastim). It increases the number of your white blood cells. This helps your body fight infections better. This medication may be prescribed to patients who:

- have cancer and are being treated with chemotherapy
- will have a bone marrow transplant and from whom stem cells must be collected
- have acute myeloid leukemia
- have a chronic decrease in white blood cells
- are infected with HIV

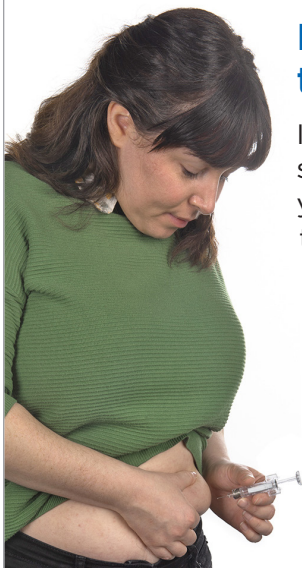
What supplies do I need?

Here’s what you’ll need:



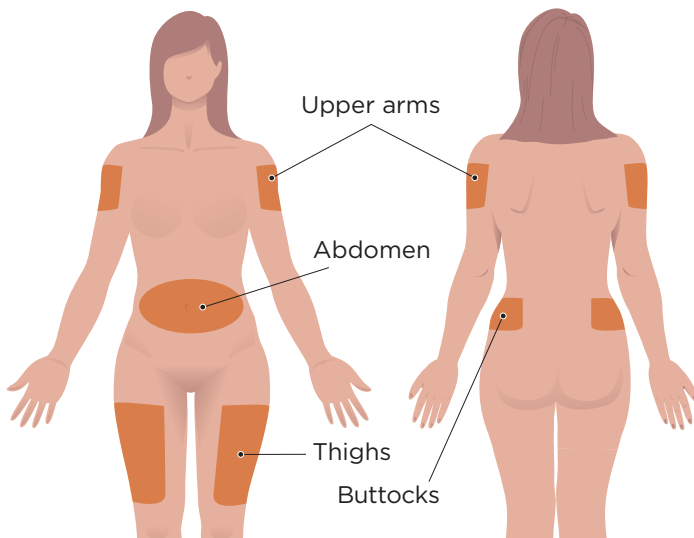
How should I be taking this medication?

It’s to be injected under the skin, every day, according to your doctor’s instructions. This takes about 10 minutes.



In which part of the body is the injection done?

You do it in the abdomen or upper thighs, as indicated by your doctor. It can also be done in the arms if a loved one is doing it for you.



If you're going to do an exercise that strains the thighs on the same day, inject it into your abdominal fat.

Examine your skin. Don't prick yourself in a place where there is:

- a wound
- pain
- a tattoo, mole or scar
- redness
- swelling
- a bruise
- tension in the skin



How do I inject the medication?

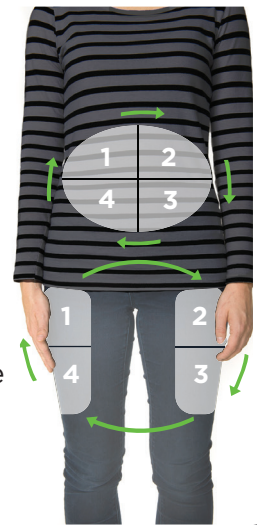
The Appendix on page 4 presents all the steps to take the medication properly. If you're afraid to inject the medication, have someone else do it the first few times. However, the person giving you the injection must, like you, have been trained by a nurse.



CAUTION !

Change area with each injection. This reduces discomfort, protects the skin, and makes the medication more effective.

To change locations, turn clockwise from one area to the next. Always keep a distance of at least 2.5 cm (1 inch) between the areas where you inject. Don't inject yourself within 5 cm (2 inches) of your navel.



What are the side effects?

Potential side effects are:

- > Mild pain, slight bleeding, bruising or a bump at the injection site. This will go away with time.
To relieve pain, apply a cold towel. Avoid massaging.
- > Pain in the bones, especially in the lower back, pelvis, legs, muscles, or joints.
This is normal, because the medication stimulates the production of white blood cells, which happens in the bones.

To relieve the pain, you can:

- take acetaminophen (Tylenol) every 4 to 6 hours. Caution! You must take your temperature beforehand.
- take one tablet of loratadine 10 mg, once a day (over-the-counter in pharmacies).
- apply heat to the area that hurts (e.g. magic bag, hot water bottle).
- take a hot bath.

Are there any precautions to take?

- > Make sure you stick to the dose and time as directed by your doctor.
 - If you miss a dose, tell your doctor or pharmacist.
- > Store the medication in the refrigerator.
- > During the treatment period, consult your pharmacist before taking natural products.
- > Order your medication in advance for future treatment cycles.
- > In general, your medication is renewable. However, check in advance that you still have renewals so you don't get caught off guard.
- > Your pharmacy needs about 1-2 days to receive the medication. Plan ahead.
- > If the CLSC is giving you the injections, make an appointment a few days in advance to make sure you have a spot when you need it.

What symptoms should I watch for?

Call your oncology pivot nurse (also called nurse navigator) or the telephone triage line if you have the following symptoms. This service is available Monday to Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Tel.:

- Bone pain not relieved by medication
- Nausea
- A sign of infection where you have injected: redness, pain, heat, or pus
- A rash (redness or pimples on the skin)



Call **514 890-8086** if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Temperature taken by mouth that is above 38°C (100.4°F) for more than an hour, or that is above 38.3°C (100.9°F)
- Chills
- Difficulty breathing
- Rapid increase in heart rate

This support service is available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. When calling, be sure to have your health insurance (RAMQ) card on hand.

Who can I contact for help or to ask questions?

For any question, you can call your pivot nurse or the telephone triage line.



CHUM PATIENT HEALTH LINE

514 890-8086

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

You're a CHUM patient? You have questions about your health status? A nurse can help you.



USEFUL RESOURCES

Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available. Ask for those that might fit your situation.



You can also find them on our website chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante

The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal
chumontreal.qc.ca

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PREPARE YOURSELF



- 1- Wash your hands carefully with soap and water.



- 2- Gather the supplies.



- 3- Sit or lie down comfortably.
On the spot where you're going to inject, pass an alcohol swab, turning from the centre outwards. Let it air dry for a few seconds.



To avoid contaminating the area, don't dry it by blowing on the skin, waving your hand, or wiping the spot.

2

INJECT THE MEDICATION



1- Take the syringe by the middle.



2- If you notice an air bubble in the syringe, don't make it come out. Instead, by tapping on it, make it move up towards the plunger of the syringe.



3- Remove the needle cap without touching it. Hold the syringe with your dominant hand.



4- Pinch your skin. This allows the medication to be injected into the layer of tissue under the skin. Keep the skin pinched throughout the injection.

2

INJECT THE MEDICATION (CONT.)



- 5- Insert the needle at a 45-degree angle to the skin.



- 6- Press the plunger of the syringe to inject all the medication. **Never pull on the plunger.**



- 7- Wait 3 seconds, release the skin, then remove the needle at the same angle as you inserted it.
Note: some syringes have a system to cover the needle at the end of the injection. This reduces the risk of accidentally pricking yourself.



- 8- Take a cotton ball to apply pressure (without rubbing) on the injection site for 5 minutes, to avoid bruising.

3

FINISHING THE PROCEDURE



- 1- Wipe your skin with a cotton swab to sponge up any drops of medication or blood that might be flowing. Don't massage it.



- 2- Dispose of the syringe and cap in the sharps container. Don't put the cap back on the needle, so as not to prick yourself.



- 3- Wash your hands after you've finished everything.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal
chumontreal.qc.ca