

What is low molecular weight heparin?

Low molecular weight heparin is an injectable prescription medicine that works against abnormal clotting. There are three prescription low molecular weight heparins. They are Lovenox[®] (enoxaparin), Fragmin[®] (dalteparin), and Innohep[®](tinzaparin).

What is Arixtra[®] (fondaparinux)?

It is also an injectable prescription medication that works against abnormal clotting; it works differently than low molecular weight heparins.

Why am I taking an injectable anticoagulant?

There are a few reasons why you might be taking this medication.

- These medications help prevent abnormal blood clots from forming in patients who have had certain surgeries of the hip, knee, or the stomach area.
- They also help treat people who have abnormal blood clots in their legs or blood clots that travel to their lungs.
- They can also be used in patients who are going to have a procedure done and need to be off of warfarin (Coumadin[®]).

*Your caregiver will judge the length of time you need to be on the injectable medication.

What if I think I've injected too much medication?

- Taking too much medication can cause severe bleeding so if you think that you have injected yourself with too much medication by accident, you should immediately call your doctor or 911.

What are the important things I should know about my medication?

- Make sure that you check your old injection sites, It is common to have itching, pain or redness in the area you injected your medication but let your doctor know if these areas stay red, or become puffy or start to ooze because those can be signs of an infection or allergic reaction
- Try to inject your medication at the same time every day, and mark it on a calendar to help yourself stay on track
- Aspirin, ibuprofen and naproxen could affect your medications' ability to work right so let your doctor or anticoagulation clinic know if you start or stop these medicines, other NSAIDS, or cough and cold medicines.
- Leave your medication at room temperature. It does not need to be refrigerated.

How do I use my injectable medication?

Step 1

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water. Towel dry.

Step 2

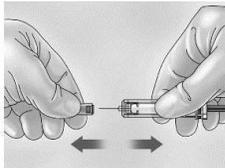
Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Choose a spot on the lower stomach area (abdomen), at least 2 inches below your belly button. Change (alternate) between using the left and right side of the lower abdomen for each injection. Never inject into a scar or bruise. If you have any questions talk to your nurse or doctor.

Step 3

Clean the injection area with an alcohol swab. Make sure you wait until the alcohol dries before injecting. If the area is still wet, the alcohol will make the injection sting.

Step 4

Remove the needle guard, by first twisting it and then pulling it in a straight line away from the body of the syringe.



Discard the needle guard.

To prevent infection, do not touch the needle or let it come in contact with any surface before the injection. A small air bubble in the syringe is normal. To be sure that you do not lose any medicine from the syringe, do not try to remove any air bubbles from the syringe before giving the injection.

Step 5

Gently pinch the skin that has been cleaned to make a fold. Make sure that you hold the fold between your thumb and the forefinger of one hand during the entire injection.

Step 6

Hold the syringe firmly in your dominant hand using the finger grip (ex: if you are left-handed, hold the syringe in your left hand). Insert the full length of the needle directly up and down (at an angle of 90°) into the skin fold.



Step 7

Inject all of the medicine in the syringe by pressing down on the plunger as far as it goes. This will activate the automatic needle protection system. You might hear a “click” when the protection system activates.

Step 8

Release the plunger. The needle will withdraw automatically from the skin, and pull back (retract) into the security sleeve where it will be locked. Don't rub the skin after the injection because that can cause a bruise.



Step 9

Discard of the needle in sharps container or another approved method.



What are Sharps?

“Sharps” is a medical term for devices with sharp points or edges that can puncture or cut skin.

Examples of sharps include:

- Needles – hollow needles used to inject drugs (medication) under the skin
- Syringes – devices used to inject medication into or withdraw fluid from the body
- Lancets, also called “fingerstick” devices – instruments with a short, two-edged blade used to get drops of blood for testing. Lancets are commonly used in the treatment of diabetes.
- Auto Injectors, including epinephrine and insulin pens – syringes pre-filled with fluid medication designed to be self-injected into the body
- Infusion sets – tubing systems with a needle used to deliver drugs to the body.
- Connection needles/sets – needles that connect to a tube used to transfer fluids in and out of the body.

Importance of Safe Sharps Disposal

Used needles and other sharps are dangerous to people and pets if not disposed of safely because they can injure people and spread infections that cause serious health conditions. The most common infections are:

- Hepatitis B (HBV),
- Hepatitis C (HCV), and
- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

Safe sharps disposal is important whether you are at home, at work, at school, traveling, or in other public places such as hotels, parks, and restaurants.

Never place loose needles and other sharps (those that are not placed in a sharps disposal container) in the household or public trash cans or recycling bins, and never flush them down the toilet. This puts trash and sewage workers, janitors, housekeepers, household members, and children at risk of being harmed.

All sharps disposal containers should be

- Made of a heavy-duty plastic
- Able to close with a tight-fitting, puncture-proof lid, without sharps being able to come out
- Upright and stable during use
- Leak-resistant
- Properly labeled

Do's and Don'ts of Sharps Disposal

Do:

- Immediately place used needles and other sharps in a sharps disposal container to reduce the risk of needle-sticks, cuts, or punctures from loose sharps.
- Use an FDA-cleared sharps disposal container, if possible. If an FDA-cleared container isn't available, use a heavy-duty plastic household container (i.e. laundry detergent container or large empty bleach container) as an alternative.
- At home, place your approved sharps waste container out of the reach of children or animals.
- Properly label your approved sharps waste container. All sharps waste container labels must be fluorescent orange, orange-red or predominantly so with the following information in contrasting color:

*Infectious Waste

*Biohazard

*International Biohazard Symbol

*Warning: Sharps

*Do Not Recycle

- Once 2/3 full, permanently close the top of the sharps waste container following the directions given. If using a leak-proof, rigid, puncture-resistant container, such as a detergent bottle, reinforce the lid with heavy-duty tape, such as duct tape. Remember to label the sharps waste container.

- Follow your community guidelines for getting rid of your sharps disposal container.
- Call your local trash or public health department (listed in the county and city government section of your phone book) to find out about sharps disposal programs in your area.

Don't:

- Throw needles and other sharps into the trash.
- Flush needles and other sharps down the toilet.
- Put needles and other sharps in your recycling bin — they are not recyclable.
- Try to remove, bend, break, or recap needles used by another person. This can lead to accidental needle sticks, which may cause serious infections.
- Attempt to remove the needle without a needle clipper device because the needles could fall, fly off, or get lost and injure someone.

References:

1. Lovenox® (enoxaparin sodium injection). Package Insert. Sanofi-aventis. Bridgewater, NJ: 2011.
2. Needles and Other Sharps (Safe Disposal Outside of Health Care Settings). FDA: US Food and Drug Administration. Last updated: 12/22/2011. Available at: <http://www.fda.gov/MedicalDevices/ProductsandMedicalProcedures/HomeHealthandConsumer/ConsumerProducts/Sharps/default.htm>.