Tips for Adult Subcutaneous (SC) Injections

Vaccines administered SC: MMR • Pneumococcal (SC or IM) • Polio • Varicella Zoster
- Gloves are NOT needed when providing immunizations. Clean/wash your hands between each client.
- Improper landmarking may reduce vaccine effectiveness or increase local adverse events.
- Report errors to your local health office for further instructions.

1. Choose the site
- Lateral aspect of upper arm is recommended
- Relax the arm: Ensure shoulders are relaxed and down
- Grasp the skinfold
  - Grasp skinfold of fatty tissue between thumb and fingers before injection to ensure it gets into the SC tissue and not the muscle
  - Note: Measure skinfold from top to bottom and needle should be about ½ this length

2. Clean the site
- Use alcohol wipe
- Allow skin to air dry: Ensures best protection
  → Reduces pain on insertion

3. Use correct needle size
- 25-27 gauge, 5/8” - 7/8”
- Choose longer needle if client is obese

4. Injection technique can reduce pain
- Insert quickly at 45° degree angle
  → Bevel of needle facing up
  → For obese clients inject at 90° angle to reach SC tissue
- Release the skin before injecting to reduce irritation
- Quickly inject to reduce pain and trauma (no aspiration)
- Withdraw in one swift motion
- Immediately apply pressure:
  → Use dry cotton pad/swab/ball
- Do not massage – it can damage tissue

BCCDC’s videos on injection landmarking and techniques:
http://www.bccdc.ca/imm-vac/ForHealthProfessionals/ImmsCompetency.htm
Quick reference adapted from BCCDC Immunization Program Manual – Section IV (dated October 2008)
Tips for Adult Intramuscular (IM) Injections

Vaccines administered IM: Hep A+B • Hib • HPV • Influenza • Meningococcal • Pneumococcal • Td/combos
- Gloves are NOT needed when providing immunizations. Clean/wash your hands between each client.
- Improper landmarking may reduce vaccine effectiveness or increase local adverse events.
- Report errors to your local health office for further instructions.

1. Choose the site
   √ Deltoid is recommended
   √ Relax the muscle: Ensure shoulders are relaxed and down. If sitting:
     → Bend vaccine arm at elbow, forearm placed across abdomen or lap
     → If using arm of chair for resting use same position and ensure arm internally rotated
   √ If client’s muscle mass is small grasp the body of muscle between thumb and fingers before and during the injection to ensure dose gets into the muscle
   X Do not inject too high (close to the acromion) to avoid risk of nerve damage.

2. Clean the Site
   - Use alcohol wipe
   - Allow skin to air dry: Ensures best protection
     → Reduces pain on insertion

3. Use correct needle size
   - 1-1½” needle size, 25 gauge
   - Needle should be long enough to reach into the muscle

4. Injection technique can reduce pain
   - Bevel of needle facing up
   - Insert needle into middle of deltoid muscle
   - Rapidly inject at a 90° angle (do not aspirate)
   - Withdraw quickly in one swift motion
   - Immediately apply pressure:
     → Use dry cotton pad/swab/ball
     → Pressure reduces bruising
   - Do not massage – it can damage tissue

BCCDC's videos on injection landmarking and techniques:
http://www.bccdc.ca/imm-vac/ForHealthProfessionals/ImmsCompetency.htm

Quick reference adapted from BCCDC Immunization Program Manual – Section IV (dated October 2008)

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