
Administration of Subcutaneous Trastuzumab

Pharmacy

Patient Information



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Introduction

This booklet gives you some simple instructions and information about injecting at home. It is intended for you to keep as a useful reminder.

A nurse will have shown you how to give yourself a subcutaneous (under the skin) injection and offered a follow up phone consultation for when you first administer your own injection.

Please note:

The information in this guide is not intended to replace the advice of your medical team.

If you have any questions or are unsure about how to inject trastuzumab, your clinical team will be able to help.

Supply of trastuzumab

Trastuzumab is supplied as a single use pre-filled syringe. You will have been advised by your clinical team or pharmacist as to how regularly you need to have a dose of trastuzumab.

You will either receive your supply of trastuzumab from the hospital or this will be couriered to your home address.

If you are collecting from the hospital:

To take the trastuzumab syringes home safely, you must bring a plastic container to the hospital, for example Tupperware and a cool box or insulated container. The nursing team will discuss this with you in advance.

When storing or transporting your trastuzumab syringes you must not:

- Expose the syringes or their plastic container to direct sunlight
- Leave the syringes in a parked car where the temperature may rise significantly for an extended period
- Expose syringes to hot air blowers in cars
- Place syringes in direct contact with heaters
- Freeze the syringes, or put on ice or next to frozen cool blocks
- **Supplies should be placed in the fridge as soon as possible.**

Storage of trastuzumab at your home

The trastuzumab syringes should be stored within a sealed plastic container such as Tupperware, in the sealed bag supplied by The Royal Marsden. The container should be stored inside your domestic refrigerator but not placed directly up against the sides, back or on the bottom of the fridge.

The syringes should be stored out of reach of children and pets.

Equipment required

You or your carer will be supplied with all the equipment required for administering trastuzumab safely at home.

If you require further supplies of the equipment, please contact the outpatient department.

From the pharmacy team, you will be provided with:

- **Prefilled syringe(s) containing trastuzumab.**

And the following equipment from the nursing team who trained you:

- **Sterile alcohol wipes**
- **Needles to administer**
- **Gauze swab**
- **Gloves and apron** (for use only if a carer is administering the injection(s))
- **Dressings**
- **A cytotoxic disposal container** – bin with purple lid or clearly marked as ‘cytotoxic’

This bin should not be overfilled, the lid must be closed when the bin is full and you or your carer can either return the full container to the hospital outpatient unit, or most local councils also offer clinical waste collection. Please check with your local council on www.gov.uk/request-clinical-waste-collection

- **Cytotoxic spillage kit** – instructions on how to use the spill kit are provided on page 5

Contents of spillage kit:

- Overshoes
- Clinical waste bag
- Two pairs of Nitrile gloves
- Facemask with plastic visor

- Disposable gown
- Plastic apron
- Paper towels.

Safety and handling requirement

Trastuzumab should not be handled by women of childbearing potential, who are trying for a baby, are pregnant or breastfeeding.

It is safe to handle the trastuzumab syringes in the plastic bags.

Only people who are trained to handle the trastuzumab syringe should handle it once it is out of the bag.

Always keep the trastuzumab syringes out of sight and reach of children and pets.

If your carer obtains a needle stick injury (where the needle has pierced or scratched the skin), the area should be thoroughly washed with water, and they should contact the outpatient team for further advice.

Remember to keep the spillage information and kit at hand in case you need it.

In the event of a spillage, follow the procedure outlined on page 5.

Procedures to follow in the event of a spillage

1. If the spillage has occurred in a general area, clear the area and restrict access to the spillage site as far as possible.
2. Open the spillage kit and put on the disposable gown, facemask with visor, and both pairs of gloves. If the spillage is on the floor, put on overshoes.
3. Mop up the spill using paper towels, starting at the outside edge of the spill and working towards the middle.
4. When the spill has been removed, wash and dry the area at least twice using clean water and paper towels.
5. Put all the waste including the gloves, mask and gown into the plastic clinical waste bag. Seal the bag and place in the cytotoxic sharps bin.
6. If the spill was on the floor, this should be cleaned with hot soapy water as soon as possible.
7. Inform the day unit that the spillage kit has been used so that they can make arrangements for supply of a new kit.

Procedures to follow in the event of a cytotoxic spill onto skin or mucous membranes

In the event of receiving a splash from a cytotoxic spillage, the following procedures should be taken immediately:

1. Wash the area thoroughly with soapy water as soon as possible. For large spillages/splashes, remove any contaminated clothing, shower and put on a clean set of clothes.
2. In the event of a cytotoxic splash to the eye, irrigate thoroughly with normal saline for approximately 20 minutes. Where saline is not available, tap water should be used.
Immediately report the incident to The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline on 020 8915 6899.

Administering your subcutaneous trastuzumab injection using a pre-filled syringe

The process for preparing and administering your trastuzumab is described below. There is also a step-by-step guide on pages 9–11.

Before your injection

You should have received face-to-face training at the hospital before your first injection at home. If you received face-to-face training but are unsure of the process, then please contact the outpatient department. If outside of hospital hours, please contact The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline on 020 8915 6899.

Choose your area

- You should select an area where you will not be distracted.
- Choose a comfortable chair that has a table nearby.
- Ensure the work surface is clean and that there are no food products within reach.
- Only people who are helping you such as your carer should be in the room; this is to avoid distractions and inadvertent exposure.

Prepare your area

- Wash and dry your hands thoroughly and clean your preparation area. If your carer is administering the trastuzumab, they will need to wear the gloves and apron.
- Collect all the equipment required (pages 3–4) and place onto your cleaned area – you will only require one trastuzumab syringe per dose.
- Make sure your spillage kit and instructions are close to hand, in case you need them.
- Move to your chosen chair where you will sit and administer the injection.

Prepare the trastuzumab injection

- Allow the trastuzumab pre-filled syringe to reach room temperature.
- Wash your hands with soap and water and dry. If you are the carer administering for someone else, put on the gloves and apron provided by the hospital after washing your hands.
- Open the packaging containing the syringe, having checked that the packaging is intact – if the packaging is damaged, discard this syringe and get a new one.
- Look at the solution in the syringe and check it is not cloudy or discoloured (do not use if it is).
- Attach the needle to the syringe.

Administering the trastuzumab injection

- Wash your hands or use alcohol gel if you have it.
- Open the packet of gauze swabs and remove any appropriate clothing to expose the area you will be using for the injection – this will be your right or left thigh (see page 8).
- Open the alcohol swab packet and take out the swab. Use the alcohol swab to clean the skin where you are going to inject yourself.
- Take the plastic cover off the needle and move the safety cap out of the way of the needle.
- Hold the syringe between the thumb and forefinger of your dominant hand as if holding a dart.
- Gently pinch the skin of the area chosen for injection up into a fold with your non-dominant hand. Check how much skin you can pinch – for some people this will be about an inch (2.5cm), for others it will be about 2 inches (5cm).
- Insert the needle into the skin at an angle of 90 degrees if you can grasp 2 inches (5cm) of skin, or 45 degrees if you can only grasp 1 inch (2.5cm) and then release the pinched skin.

- **Very slowly over 3–5 minutes** inject the drug by pushing on the end of the syringe plunger.
- Withdraw the needle and apply gentle pressure on the injection site. Use a gauze swab to clear away any leakage. Do not massage the area.
- Put the used needle and syringe into the sharps container.

After administering the trastuzumab injection

Do not put any of the used items in with your normal household waste.

Discard the syringe, packaging, gloves and apron (if used) into the cytotoxic disposal container. This container must be stored out of sight and reach of children and pets.

Rotating your injection site

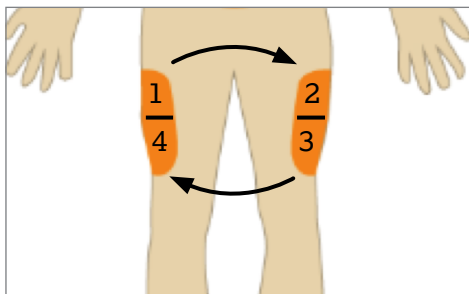
Injecting into the same area too many times can cause fatty lumps to appear on the surface of your skin, making injections more difficult and painful. This is known as lipohypertrophy.

To avoid this from developing, make sure you pick a different area of skin to put each injection into, **using your thighs only**.

You can administer your trastuzumab injection into your **outer thigh**.

You should keep each new injection spot at least an inch/2.5cm away from your previous injection site.

In the diagram below, rotate between areas 1–4 on the thighs only.



Step-by-step instructions for administering trastuzumab



Step 1: Wash your hands or clean with alcohol gel. Open the gauze swabs and uncover the injection site chosen.



Step 2: Open the packaging containing the syringe. Check the syringe and make sure it is not cracked and the solution appears clear with no particles in it. Remove the protective cap.



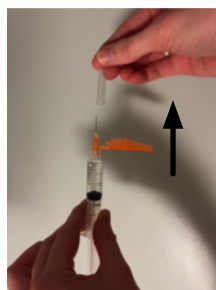
Step 3: Attach the needle to the top of the syringe and twist into place. Place on your work surface.



Step 4: Using a fresh sterile alcohol swab, clean the injection site. Allow the site to air dry.



Step 5: Pick up the syringe. Pull the safety cover on the needle out of the way to prepare for injecting.



Step 6: Remove the clear needle cover from the needle, pulling away from your body.

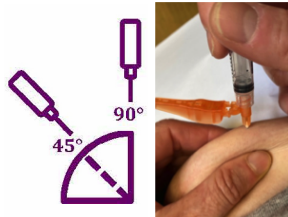
See page 10 for the next step



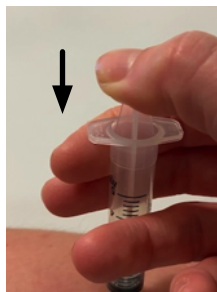
Step 7: Hold the syringe between your thumb and forefinger of your dominant hand, as if holding a dart.



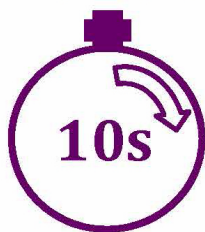
Step 8: With your free hand, pinch the skin where you are going to inject – check how much skin you can pinch – is it nearer 1" (2.5cm) or 2" (5cm)?



Step 9: Insert the needle into the skin at 45° angle for 1", or 90° for 2", then release the pinched skin.



Step 10: If needed, use one hand to support the syringe and the other hand to push the plunger down **very slowly over 3–5 minutes** until all the drug has gone in.



Step 11: After administering all the drug over 3–5 minutes, hold the needle in for a further 10 seconds to ensure all the drug has been administered.



Step 12: Once you have waited at least 10 seconds and the syringe is empty, withdraw the needle from your skin and apply gentle pressure on the injection site.

See page 11 for the next step



Step 13: Use a gauze swab to clean away any leakage. Do not massage the area.



Step 14: On a hard surface, push the needle into the safety cover.



Step 15: Place the used syringe and needle into the cytotoxic sharps container.

***Please note that the purple cytotoxic container is not shown in the photo for demonstration purposes only.**



Step 16: Dispose of any remaining empty packets into the cytotoxic sharps container but keep unused gauze swabs for future use.



Step 17: Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.

Adverse effects to trastuzumab

Your doctor, specialist nurse or pharmacist will be able to advise on the common side effects of treatment.

One of the side effects of trastuzumab is it may cause **heart problems** during treatment and occasionally after treatment has stopped. In order to monitor this, you will need to have repeat heart scans every three to six months booked by your doctor while you are on trastuzumab. You will be reviewed by your medical team in the hospital every three to six months with the results of these tests and if there are any concerns, they may refer you for further investigation or hold your treatment for a short time.

Any raised **temperatures above 38°C** must be reported to The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline immediately. See page 16 for contact details.

Do's and Do not's

Do's

Do ensure you administer the trastuzumab over 3–5 minutes.

Do alternate between right and left thigh for injection.

Do make sure you put your used syringes in the sharps bin each time you inject – never leave them lying around.

Do administer the injection at the same time each day.

Do contact the Royal Marsden (see page 16) if you are unsure on how to inject or would like more information.

Do not's

Do not put the syringe down anywhere or touch the needle with anything before injecting.

Do not inject into bruised or scarred/damaged skin.

Do not rub the skin after you have injected.

Do not share or let anyone else use your syringes.

Do not dispose of any equipment in general household waste.

Do not overfill the sharps bin – the lid must be closed when the bin is full. You or your carer must either return the container to the hospital at your next visit, or contact your local council to arrange collection.

Troubleshooting

What if...	You should...
What if you realise that your medication has been left out of the fridge?	<p>If left out of fridge for less than 3 hours, the trastuzumab is still appropriate for use.</p> <p>If left out of fridge for more than 3 hours, the trastuzumab is no longer appropriate for use. Please use another one if you have been provided with more than one dose, and then contact the pharmacy homecare team within opening hours. If you do not have another dose, please also contact the team as above.</p>
What if the container for the drug is damaged, such as broken syringe?	<p>Please use another one if you have been provided with more than one dose, and then contact the pharmacy homecare team within opening hours. If you do not have another dose, please also contact the team as above.</p>
What if you lose the syringe?	
What if the contents of the syringe are cloudy?	
How do you manage a spill of trastuzumab?	<p>Please ensure you have the spill kit to hand when handling your medication. Follow the instructions on page 5 of this leaflet. Please contact the outpatient department if you have any queries.</p>

What if...	You should...
What if you experience side effects to the treatment?	Please contact The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline 020 8915 6899 (available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week).
What if you want to stop giving yourself injections?	If you want to stop giving yourself injections or there are reasons why this becomes unsafe, please contact your clinical nurse specialist.
What if you miss a dose of trastuzumab or forgot to administer it?	If you miss a dose for any reason, please contact your clinical nurse specialist for advice.

If you ran out of...	You should...
Trastuzumab pre-filled syringe	Contact pharmacy homecare team
Other equipment eg gauze swab, cytotoxic sharps container	Contact the outpatient department

Contact details

Outpatient Department, Chelsea

Tel: 020 7808 2430 and ask for breast injection clinic nurse
(Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm)

Outpatient Department, Sutton

Tel: 020 8661 3557 and ask for breast injection clinic nurse
(Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm)

Royal Marsden Pharmacy Homecare team

Tel: 020 7811 8313
(Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm)

Chelsesa RM Medicines (Outpatient Pharmacy)

Tel: 020 7349 9807
(Monday to Friday, 8.30am – 6.30pm)

Sutton RM Medicines (Outpatient Pharmacy)

Tel: 020 8915 6159
(Monday to Friday, 8.30am – 6.30pm)

Medical Day Unit, Chelsea

Tel: 020 7808 2320 or 020 7808 2325
(Monday to Friday, 9am – 6pm)

Medical Day Unit, Sutton

Tel: 020 8661 3174 or 020 8661 3084
(Monday to Friday, 9am – 6pm)

Alternatively, please call:

The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline: 020 8915 6899

You can ring the hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Call us straight away if you are feeling unwell or are worried about the side effects of cancer treatments.

This service provides specialist advice and support to all Royal Marsden patients, as well as to their carers, and both hospital and community-based doctors and nurses caring for Royal Marsden patients.

Notes and questions

References

This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from:

The Royal Marsden Help Centre

Telephone: Chelsea 020 7811 8438 / 020 7808 2083

Sutton 020 8661 3759 / 3951

Email: patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk

No conflicts of interest were declared in the production of this booklet.

Should you require information in an alternative format, please contact The Royal Marsden Help Centre.

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