

How to Administer IM and SC Injections to Adults

Intramuscular (IM) Injections

Administer these vaccines via IM route:

Tetanus, diphtheria (Td), or with pertussis (Tdap); hepatitis A; hepatitis B; human papillomavirus (HPV); trivalent inactivated influenza (TIV); and meningococcal conjugate (MCV). Administer polio (IPV) and pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPSV) either IM or SC.

Injection site:

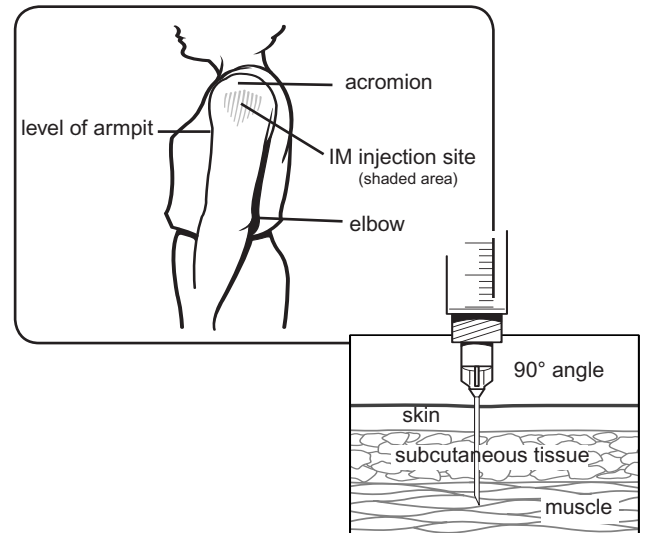
Give in the central and thickest portion of the deltoid—above the level of the armpit and below the acromion (see the diagram).

Needle size:

22–25 gauge, 1–1½" needle (see note at right)

Needle insertion:

- Use a needle long enough to reach deep into the muscle.
- Insert the needle at a 90° angle to the skin with a quick thrust.
- Separate two injections given in the same deltoid muscle by a minimum of 1".



Note: A 5/8" needle is sufficient in adults weighing <130 lbs (<60 kg); a 1" needle is sufficient in adults weighing 130–152 lbs (60–70 kg); a 1–1½" needle is recommended in women weighing 152–200 lbs (70–90 kg) and men weighing 152–260 lbs (70–118 kg); a 1½" needle is recommended in women weighing >200 lbs (>90 kg) or men weighing >260 lbs (>118 kg). A 5/8" (16mm) needle may be used only if the skin is stretched tight, the subcutaneous tissue is not bunched, and injection is made at a 90-degree angle.

Subcutaneous (SC) Injections

Administer these vaccines via SC route:

MMR, varicella, meningococcal polysaccharide (MPSV), and zoster (shingles). Administer polio (IPV) and pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPSV) either SC or IM.

Injection site:

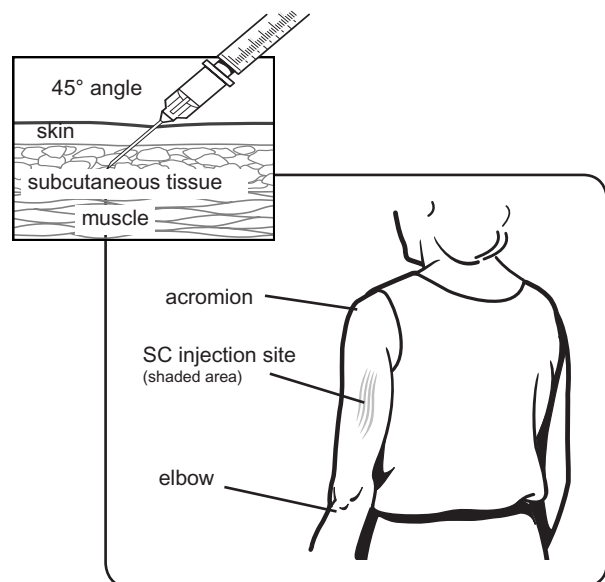
Give in fatty tissue over the triceps (see the diagram).

Needle size:

23–25 gauge, 5/8" needle

Needle insertion:

- Pinch up on the tissue to prevent injection into the muscle. Insert the needle at a 45° angle to the skin.
- Separate two injections given in the same area of fatty tissue by a minimum of 1".



Adapted by the Immunization Action Coalition, courtesy of the Minnesota Department of Health