

# Heparin injections in maternity when you are at risk of blood clots

Maternity Services

Last reviewed: September 2025

Next review: September 2028

Information for patients

Leaflet number: 765 Version: 2

## What is heparin?

Heparin is a blood thinner (anticoagulant). It treats blood clots. It is also used to reduce the risk of blood clots being made. Sometimes it can be used to try to reduce the risk of miscarriage.

A doctor has to prescribe heparin. It is injected into the fatty layer under the skin (subcutaneous layer). You can have injections 1 or sometimes 2 times a day.

## Why do we give heparin in pregnancy and after birth?

The risk of blood clots is higher during pregnancy. Your blood changes to help your body prepare to give birth. The blood becomes more sticky and more likely to clot.

After the birth, the risks stay high as your body adapts to not being pregnant. It is important that you carry on having heparin during this time. We may start some people on heparin just for the days or weeks after giving birth.

We give heparin to people who have a higher chance of blood clots. This can be due to:

- their medical history
- the results of blood tests
- earlier miscarriages or certain pregnancy problems

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.uhleicester.nhs.uk](http://www.uhleicester.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net](mailto:uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net)

## When is heparin given?

Heparin may be given during pregnancy.

It may also be given for between 1 and 6 weeks after your baby's birth. These are the times when the risk of clots is highest.

Heparin treatment can be started very early in pregnancy.

We do not advise it when planning a pregnancy. We do not know how long it may take you to become pregnant. We prefer to give medicine for only as long as you really need it. This reduces the risk of side effects.

## Are there any risks linked with heparin?

- Heparin is seen as safe to use in pregnancy. It does not cross the placenta. It does not affect your baby.
- The most common side effect is a small amount of bruising at the injection site.
- The risk of bleeding with low-dose heparin due to "thinning" of the blood, is small.
- Heparin does not usually cause bleeding by itself. If you have bleeding caused by other things, for example from a threatened miscarriage, your bleeding may be a little heavier.
- You are usually advised to stop having heparin when your labour starts, or to miss a dose on the morning of a planned birth.
- An epidural or spinal anaesthetic cannot be given within 12 hours of a dose of heparin (24 hours if having injections 2 times a day or higher dose). We will start heparin again at least 4 to 6 hours after birth.
- The old type of heparin could sometimes cause thinning of the bones (osteoporosis). This is much less likely with modern heparins, such as Dalteparin sodium (Fragmin®) and Enoxaparin sodium (Inhixa®). We advise you to have plenty of calcium in your diet (for example from milk, cheese and yoghurt).
- Around 5 in 100 people get a skin rash at the injection site. If this happens, or if there is any unexplained bruising or bleeding, please contact the hospital (see last page for contact details).
- If you have an allergy to Dalteparin sodium (Fragmin®) or Enoxaparin sodium (Inhixa®), we can use other types of injections

## Important advice

**Tell a midwife, nurse or doctor if you notice any of the following side effects:**

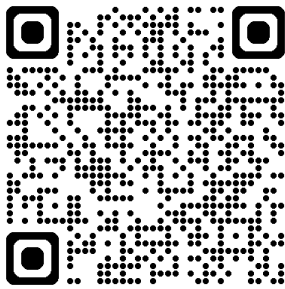
- Red spots under your skin, which do not go away when you put pressure on them.
- You have unexplained bruising.
- Your injection site becomes red and itchy.

## How is heparin given?

- The syringes come pre-prepared with the correct dose for you to give.
- We will show you how to give your own injections. Most people (or their partners) manage this very easily.
- The needle on the syringe is very fine.
- The injection may sting slightly. It is not usually too painful.
- We will give you a sharps box (a strong plastic box just for syringes) to get rid of the syringes.

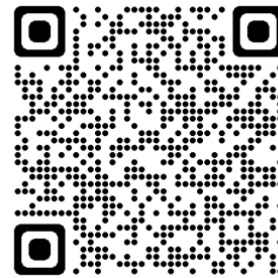
## Useful videos:

Inhixa®



[www.techdow-pharma.co.uk/videoplay.html](http://www.techdow-pharma.co.uk/videoplay.html)

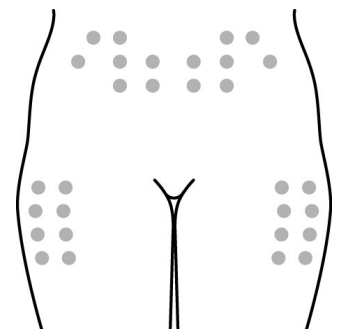
Fragmin®



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=39sLVvZHE14](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39sLVvZHE14)

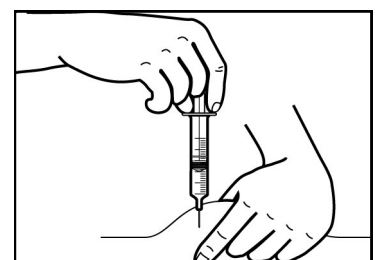
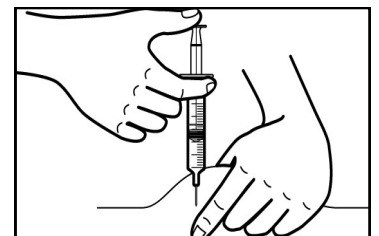
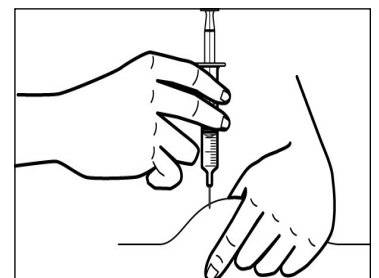
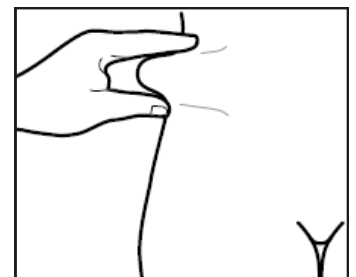
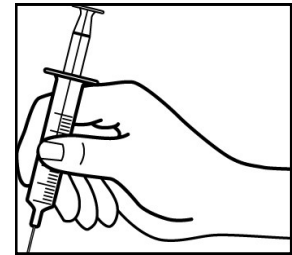
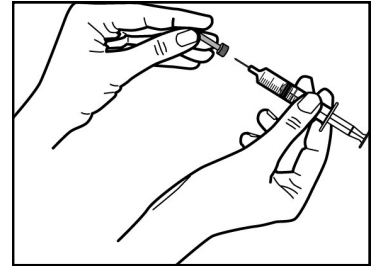
## Instructions

- Make sure you have a sharps box and cotton wool ball ready for after the injection.
- Wash your hands before giving the injection.
- Sit in a comfortable position so that you are relaxed.
- Select the site for the injection.
- Suitable injection sites are the sides of your tummy. Do not use the area near your belly button).
- Some people prefer to use the front of their thighs. Manufacturers may not recommend this.
- Please speak to your health professional if you wish to avoid your tummy.
- Avoid bruised, scarred, reddened or hard areas.
- Change the sites to avoid skin irritation.



## How to use:

- Take the syringe. Carefully thumb and forefinger remove the rubber covering the needle. Do not touch the sterile needle.
- Do not remove the air bubble in the pre-filled syringe.
- Hold the syringe halfway down the barrel in one hand.
- Use your other hand to gently grasp a fold of skin for your injection.
- Hold the skin between your thumb and index finger.
- Hold the syringe at a right angle to the skin, like a dart.
- Quickly insert the needle all the way into the skin fold.
- Push the plunger down steadily.
- Keep pushing until all of the fluid is injected into the skin.
- **Make sure you hold the skin fold throughout the injection.**
- Let go of the skin fold.
- Pull the needle straight out at the same angle that it was inserted.
- Put cotton wool over the injection site. Apply constant pressure for 2 to 3 minutes. You may find that the area stings afterwards. This is normal.



**To avoid bruising do not rub the injection site after you have injected yourself.**

Put the needle in the sharps box. Store this out of the reach of children.

## What do I do with the sharps box?

When the sharps box is full to the line, close and lock it.

Give to your GP, nurse, midwife or the hospital team for disposal.

Do **not** put it in the household rubbish.

You should ask for a new sharps box before the old one is completely full.

## Commonly asked questions

### What do I do if I forget a dose?

- If you forget a dose and are close to your next scheduled dose, skip the missed dose. Inject the next dose at the regularly scheduled time. Do not take a double dose.

### How do I get more heparin?

- Ask your GP to prescribe heparin. (If your GP does not want to do this, please let us know). Your pharmacist will need at least 24 hours to order the heparin for you.

### Do I need any tests?

- Sometimes the team caring for you arrange a blood test. This is to check you are on the right dose of heparin. This will need to be done 3 to 4 hours after your injection.

### How do I store heparin?

- It does not need to be kept in a fridge. Store the heparin syringes at room temperature (between 15 and 30°C).
- Keep the stock of injections and the sharps box in a safe place.
- Keep out of reach of children.

## Other medication

**Do not take any drugs other than those prescribed by your doctor while you are on heparin.**

You must tell any doctors or dentists treating you that you are taking heparin.

## What should I do if I am worried or need advice about heparin?

If you have any questions or concerns about your heparin please contact us on numbers on the last page.



## Contact numbers

### Specialist Nurse for Obstetric Haematology

(If you are under the care of the haematology clinic)

Mobile: **07983 057833** (Monday to Thursday 9am to 4pm)

If you have been started on these injections by another clinic:

Leicester Royal Infirmary: **0116 258 6106**

Leicester General Hospital: **0116 258 4829**

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

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Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

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