

Maternity Services

# Clot Prevention: information for women taking LMWH (Low Molecular Weight Heparin)



## Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for women who have been advised to take low molecular weight heparin (LMWH, also called Fragmin® or dalteparin sodium) during or just after their pregnancy to help prevent a clot.

## Why have you been prescribed LMWH?

When you are pregnant your blood becomes more sticky; this means it can clot more easily. If you have other risk factors such as being overweight, are a smoker, or have a family history of blood clots, you might be at risk of developing a clot in your leg (known as a deep vein thrombosis or DVT) or in your lung (pulmonary embolism or PE).

LMWH thins your blood and reduces the risk of you developing a clot. Your doctors have assessed you and you have been advised to take LMWH before and possibly after your baby is born. This is because the risk of developing a clot starts early in the pregnancy and is highest after the baby is born.

**You must complete this course of LMWH even if you are discharged from the hospital.**

## Symptoms and signs to look out for

- Pain, swelling and tenderness in your calf and/or thigh may be signs of a deep vein thrombosis.
- Chest pain, breathlessness, coughing blood and/or collapse may be signs of a pulmonary embolism.

## How do I take LMWH??

LMWH is given as an injection. You will be shown how to give yourself the injections before you go home but this leaflet also gives you instructions. The best places for you to inject into are:

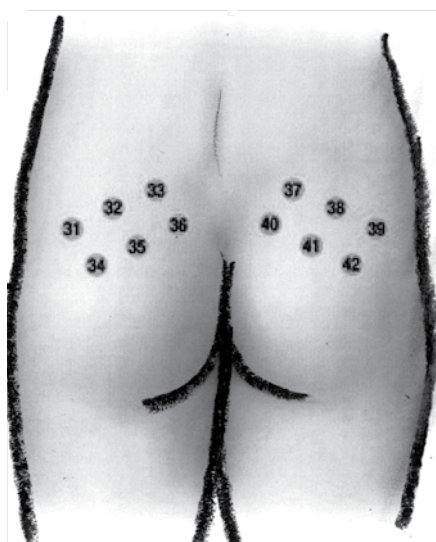
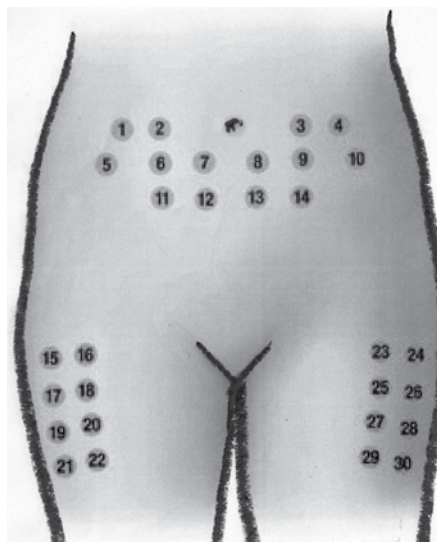
- The U-shape area around your belly button. It is safe to inject LMWH into the abdomen while pregnant.
- The upper outer side of the thigh.
- The upper outer part of the buttock.

If you have had surgery (such as a caesarean section), avoid injecting too close to the wound or bandages.

## How do I give myself the LMWH injection?

### STEP 1

Wash your hands and make sure the area you are going to inject is clean before you begin. **Be sure to use a different area (site) to inject into each day to help prevent bruising.** You can use these pictures to help you choose a new site each day.





## STEP 2

Open the pack and remove the syringe. Be sure the medicine is clear and has nothing floating in it. If you see anything in the medicine, talk to your doctor or midwife.

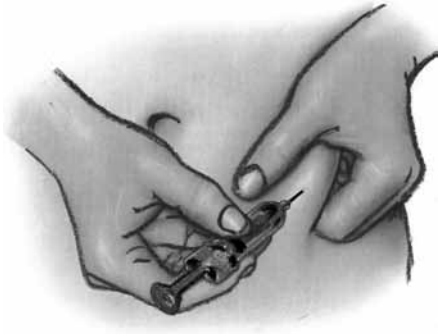
**Do not** *squeeze* the syringe to remove the air bubble as you may lose some of the medicine and then not have a full dose.

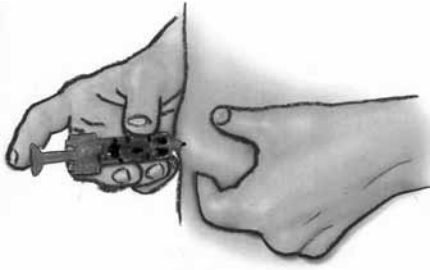
## STEP 3

You need to make sure that you inject LMWH into fatty tissue. To do this, pinch a fold of skin between the thumb and fingers of one hand.

- If you are going to inject into your abdomen (tummy area) it is best to do this while sitting.
- If you are using your outer thigh it is best to do this when sitting or lying down.
- If you decide to inject into your one of the cheeks on your bottom (buttock) you may not need to pinch any skin as there should already be enough of a layer of fatty tissue.

LMWH must not be injected into the muscle as it won't be absorbed properly.





#### **STEP 4**

Hold the syringe with your other hand. Insert the entire needle into the fold of skin at a 45-90 degree angle. Then slowly press the plunger down until the full dose of LMWH has been given.

#### **STEP 5**

Remove the needle while letting go of the fold of skin. Dispose of the syringe in the yellow 'sharps' box you have been given. This box should be stored away from children. If you do not have a 'sharps' box or need a new one please contact your midwife or GP.



## Side effects of LMWH

LMWH, like all medications, may have side effects. The most common ones are swelling, bruising and/or an occasional droplet of blood at the site of the injection after you remove the needle.

## Frequently asked questions

### ***What can I do to reduce the risk of getting a clot?***

It is important to keep moving around and well hydrated. Avoid sitting down for long periods of time.

### ***Is it safe to take LMWH during pregnancy?***

**Yes.** LMWH does not cross the placenta to the baby. Many studies have shown that there is no increased risk to the baby in women taking LMWH. However, if you start LMWH during pregnancy you may need an anaesthetic referral to discuss epidural options during labour.

### ***Is it safe to breastfeed while taking LMWH?***

**Yes.** Only a very low level of LMWH is secreted into the breast milk. This level is so low that your baby will not be affected.

### ***Does LMWH affect other medications I might be taking?***

LMWH can affect other medications so it is important to tell your doctor and pharmacist all the medications you are taking.

### ***Can I travel while taking LMWH?***

If you need to travel by plane or for a long distance, make sure that you drink plenty of water and walk around for a few minutes every hour. You should also wear elasticated support stockings throughout your journey. Make sure you have enough injections for the time you are away and know where the nearest Accident and Emergency Department is, should you need medical attention. You will need a letter from your doctor to explain that you need to take your injections onto the plane.

### ***How should I store LMWH?***

Keep the syringes in the pack until it is time to use them. LMWH syringes must be stored at room temperature (20°C to 25°C). Keep LMWH where children cannot reach it.

### ***Can I start taking the contraceptive pill while taking LMWH?***

**Yes**, there is no interaction between any of the contraceptive pills, injections or implants and LMWH. However if you have had a clot detected then you must check with your doctor before starting any of the above.

### ***What do I do if I miss an injection?***

You should have your injection as soon as possible. You will then need to have your next injection 24 hours later. This will become the new time in the day that you have your injection, as you should never have more than one dose of LMWH within 24 hours. It may be useful to make a note of this new time for having your injection, to help you remember that it has changed.

### ***What do I do if I think I am going into labour?***

If you are due for your LMWH injection and you are having regular painful contractions you should **NOT** take your injection. You should call the Maternity Assessment Unit at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford or the Delivery Suite at the Horton General Hospital in Banbury and explain that you are taking LMWH.

## How to contact us

If you are concerned in anyway about using LMWH injections you can contact either your community midwife or GP, or telephone the Maternity Assessment Unit/Delivery Suite on:

**01865 220 221** for the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford

or

**01295 229 473** for the Horton General Hospital in Banbury.

**If you have any symptoms of a DVT or PE, please seek medical attention straight away at your local Accident & Emergency Department or Delivery Suite.**

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

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