

WHAT IS LOW MOLECULAR WEIGHT HEPARIN?

Low molecular weight heparin (LMWH) is an anticoagulant (also called a blood thinner) that is given by injection under the skin. Anticoagulants are medicines that treat and prevent blood clots. The LMWHs available in Canada include: enoxaparin (Lovenox® or Redesca®), dalteparin (Fragmin®), nadroparin (Fraxiparine®), and tinzaparin (Innohep®).

WHY ARE LMWHs USED?

- To prevent an abnormal blood clot from developing
- To treat a blood clot in the legs or lungs

WHAT DOSE OF LMWH WILL BE PRESCRIBED?

The dose of LMWH will depend on whether it is being given to prevent or to treat a blood clot, and will also be based on the person's body weight.

- Dalteparin (Fragmin®) is given once or twice a day
- Enoxaparin (Lovenox®) can be given once or twice a day
- Nadroparin (Fraxiparine®) can be given once or twice a day
- Tinzaparin (Innohep®) is given once a day

Your healthcare professional will determine the dose, the number of injections per day (one or two), and how long the LMWH will continue. Patients should not change the dose or stop taking this medication unless instructed by your healthcare professional.

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR TAKING LMWH

- Do not inject into muscle. The best way to avoid this is to pinch up enough skin.
- Do not use the LMWH if the expiry date on the box or syringe has passed.

- Always select a different site for each injection.
- Take the LMWH at around the same time every day.

HOW IS LMWH STORED?

- Store the LMWH syringes at room temperature (not in the refrigerator).
- Do not leave the syringes in direct sunlight.

WHAT IF YOU MISS A DOSE?

It is important to ensure you fill your prescription on time. If you miss a dose:

- Take your missed dose as soon as you remember and then call your healthcare professional for further instruction.
- If you cannot reach your healthcare professional right away, take your next injection 12 or 24 hours from when you had it last, depending on how often you have been giving yourself the injections.
- Do not take two injections at once in order to make up for an injection that was missed.

DOES LMWH HAVE SIDE EFFECTS?

The most common side effects are pain, redness, bruising, or swelling where the injection is given. These side effects can usually be minimized by rotating injection sites and gently applying pressure for 5 minutes after the injection.

The most important side effect of LMWH is bleeding.

All anticoagulants increase the risk of bleeding. Bleeding can be minor or major:

- Minor bleeding stops on its own, and does not last long. Examples of minor bleeding include most nose bleeding, gum bleeding, bruising, etc.
- Major bleeding is more serious and requires medical attention (going to the emergency department), and stopping the LMWH at least temporarily. Examples include stomach pain/vomiting blood, having a dark black bowel movement, or bleeding that does not stop.



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WHEN SHOULD YOU CONTACT YOUR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL URGENTLY?

If you have any of the following symptoms of bleeding:

- Becoming pale, very weak and tired
- Experiencing shortness of breath or chest pain
- Black/tarry or bloody bowel movements
- Bleeding from the rectum
- Pink/red or dark coloured urine
- Excessive menstrual bleeding
- Coughing or vomiting up blood
- Any bleeding that won't stop
- Physical injury such as head injury, broken bones, car accidents, sports injuries
- If an injection site becomes red, painful, warm, or oozes. These could be signs of infection and you should contact your healthcare professional
- New rashes
- Unusual bruising for unknown reasons

TAKE AWAY MESSAGES

- Remember to take LMWH around the same time every day, rotating the sites that you inject.
- Call your healthcare professionals or go to the emergency room if you have unusual or major bleeding.
- Let your healthcare professionals know you are taking LMWH.
- You should always carry an up to date, complete list of all medications you take, in your wallet or on your smart phone or smart watch. You may also feel comfortable wearing a medical ID bracelet or necklace.

HOW TO SELF-INJECT LMWH PREFILLED SYRINGES

LMWH is given as an injection. The injection is given just under the skin. A healthcare professional will demonstrate how to give the injection. The general steps for injecting LMWH with a pre-filled syringe are below.

Check to make sure the pre-filled syringe has not expired. It should be clear and colourless. If not, do not inject. If you need to draw up your dose from a multi-dose vial, ask your healthcare professional for assistance.

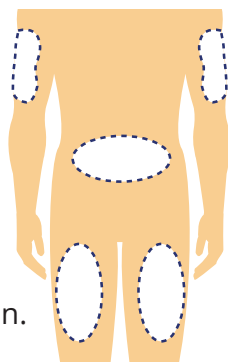


1

Wash your hands. The skin needs to be clean and dry. You do not need to use alcohol swabs. Sit or lie down. You need to be able to clearly see the area where you will inject, and easily pinch up the skin.

2

Pick a place to give the injection. You can inject on your tummy, thighs, or the backs of your arms. The tummy is usually the best site in adults BUT should NOT be used in infants or children. Avoid the area near your belly button, near a surgical scar, and near bruises from previous injections. Choose a different site and side for each injection.



3

Remove the cap from the needle by pulling it straight off the syringe. Hold the syringe in the

hand you write with. With the other hand, pinch up skin from the selected area between your thumb and forefinger to make a fold in your skin. Inject at a 90° angle. Do not release the pinched skin fold while injecting. While holding the pinched-up skin, slowly push the plunger down all the way to inject all of the medicine. After all of the medicine has been injected, pull the needle straight out.

4

Let go of the pinched skin fold. Apply pressure (without rubbing) for 5 minutes to the site to prevent bruising.



5

Do not put syringes in the garbage. Put the syringes in a container made for needles (a sharps container) provided by your healthcare professional. They will also provide you with instructions on correct disposal of the container.

Please see the video on how to inject LMWH on the Thrombosis Canada website under [Patient Resources](#).