Intracavernosal injections

A guide to using injection therapy for the management of erectile dysfunction

Intracavernosal injection involves giving yourself an injection into your penis to allow you to get an erection.

The following information is a guide on the use of intracavernosal injections. If you have any questions or concerns about using intracavernosal injections, please phone Brisbane Urology Clinic to speak with your doctor or one of our specialist urology nurses.

Types of intracavernosal medications

There are two common types of intracavernosal injection available in Australia:

- **Caverject®** is a single drug called *Alprostadil.* It is available in a pre-filled syringe from most pharmacies with a prescription.
- **Compounded injections** (eg. Bimix, Trimix, Quadmix) are a combination of 2 to 4 drugs. They are only available from compounding pharmacies with a prescription. You will need to draw up the compounded solution into a syringe yourself before use.

Your doctor will recommend which intracavernosal injection agent is best for you.

Calculating the dose of medication to use

Intracavernosal injection should give you an erection which is satisfactory for sexual intercourse and lasts for 30 to 60 minutes. Different men require different doses of intracavernosal medication to achieve this.

Sometimes the starting dose may not give you an adequate erection. If this happens, the next time you inject you will need to increase the dose. You can use the dose-response diary on the last page of this handout to keep a record of the doses you have used.

Important: You can only inject once a day and a maximum of 3 times per week. If you inject and it does not work, you cannot add more. You have to wait until the next day to inject again.

Caverject® dose

Caverject® is available in 10mcg and 20mcg pre-filled syringes. The usual starting dose is 2.5mcg to 5mcg. You will be advised what starting dose to use. If this dose does not work, increase the dose by 2.5mcg to 5mcg on the next attempt, up to a maximum of 20mcg.

Compounded injection dose

The compounded solution is stored in a bottle. You will need to draw it up into a 1mL syringe (pictured). The numbers on the side of the syringe go up in tens (10, 20, 30 etc.) These numbers correspond to 'Units' of medication. To use 10 units of the medication you need to draw up the solution into the syringe to the 10 mark.



You will be advised what starting dose to use. If this dose does not work, increase the dose by 5 units on the next attempt.

Once you have established the dose that gives you an erection which is satisfactory for sexual intercourse and lasts for 30 to 60 minutes, then stay on that dose for future injections.

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Problem solving

- If injecting is not working despite following the instructions above, contact us to discuss moving to a stronger preparation or using an alternative treatment.
- If you are using close to 1mL of solution (a full syringe), contact us to discuss moving to a stronger preparation which may be more cost effective.
- If the medication is not stored appropriately it will become less effective. Please ensure you store it as instructed by the pharmacy.
- If the dose you usually inject does not work, it could be due to a number of reasons, including incorrect injection technique, using the wrong dose, or worsening of your erectile dysfunction. If this happens, try using your usual dose at the next attempt. If it does not work again, contact us for further instructions.

Preparing the injection

You can use intracavernosal injections a maximum of once per day and a maximum of 3 times per week.

Caverject® preparation

Remove all pieces from the package. Clean the rubber membrane at the tip of the syringe using one of the alcohol swabs provided. Peel the foil from the needle cap. Attach the needle to the device by pressing the needle on to the tip of the device and turning clockwise until it is firmly in place.

Hold the device with the needle pointing upwards. The plunger rod is now in the extended position.

Turn the plunger rod until it stops. This automatically mixes the alprostadil powder and the diluent. Invert the device twice in order to make sure that the solution becomes evenly mixed. The solution should be clear. Do not use if it is cloudy or contains particles.

Hold the device with the needle pointing upwards. Carefully remove the inner protective cap from the needle. Do not use if the needle is bent.

To remove air from the device, keep the device upright and press the plunger rod as far as it will go. A few drops will appear at the needle point and the solution will be free from bubbles.

Turn the end of the plunger rod slowly to dial up the right dose. The number appearing in the window indicates the dose of the injection. If you make a mistake, continue to turn the plunger rod until you reach the correct dose.

A Caverject® instructional video can be viewed on the Pfizer Meds App available at https://www.pfizermedicalinformation.com.au/en-au/patient/caverject (use code 5859)

Compounded injection preparation

Equipment required:

- 1 ml syringe
- Medication
- Alcohol wipes x 2
- Sharps disposal container

Wash your hands with soap and water before starting the procedure.

Remove the medication from the fridge and allow to warm on the bench. Check that your medication is clear and there is nothing floating in it. If there are floaties, allow the medication to warm a little longer on the bench. Do not warm the medication by any other means. Check the expiration date of the medication.

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1. Hold the medication so that your fingers do not touch the rubber stopper through which the needle will be inserted.
2. Using a circular motion, wipe the top of the vial with an alcohol wipe.

1

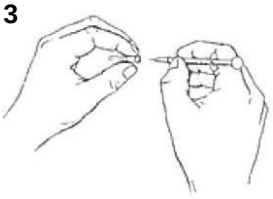


2



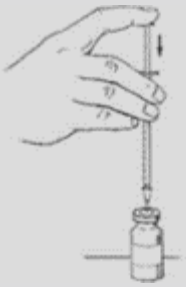
3. Remove the needle cap. Do not allow the needle to touch anything prior to drawing up the medication or before injecting the medication.
4. Draw up an amount of air into the syringe, equal to the amount of medication to be injected.

3



5. Push the needle through the centre of the stopper while holding the barrel. Push the air into the bottle using the plunger.
6. Turn the bottle and syringe upside down. Slowly draw out the medication into the syringe using the plunger.

5



6



7. Tap the syringe gently to remove the bubbles. Move the plunger in and out several times while gently tapping the syringe, thus removing all the air bubbles. Draw out the required dose.
8. Gently remove the needle from the vial. Place the syringe on a solid surface, ensuring the needle does not touch anything.

7



8

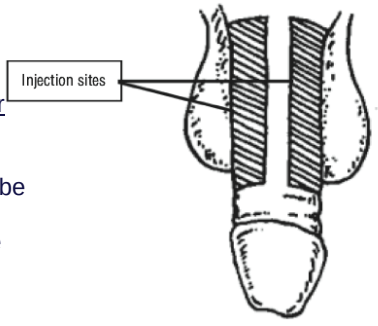


Giving the injection

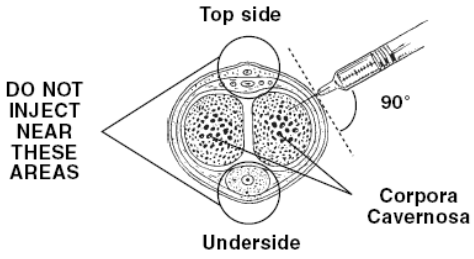
You or your partner can give the injection.

The injection should be given on the side of your penis, more towards the topside than the underside (9 - 11 o'clock and 1 - 3 o'clock position) (the shaded area in the picture). It can be given anywhere along the shaft but not into the head of your penis. Do not inject into the midline of your penis on the top or the underside.

You should alternate the injection site each time you inject.



View of penis from above



Cross section of penis

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1. Grasp the head of your penis, not your foreskin. Pull your penis sideways so it rests against your inner thigh for support. Locate the area of injection. Wipe your skin with an alcohol wipe. Maintain traction on the head of your penis after cleaning the side of the penis.



2. Hold the syringe around the barrel between your thumb and index finger like a pen. Do not have a finger on the plunger. Place the needle on the site of injection at a 90-degree angle to the skin. Push the needle in gently but firmly, all the way down to the hilt.



3. Shift your finger so that your index finger or thumb can push in the plunger. Push the medication in slowly over 8 to 10 seconds.



4. Before removing the needle count to 10. Remove the needle. Apply pressure to the injection site for one minute. Gently massage the penis for one to two minutes. The response to the medication can take 15 to 30 minutes. Dispose of the needle and syringe safely and appropriately.



Needle disposal

Please contact the Queensland Clean Needle Helpline for details and locations for safe and legal disposal of your used needles on 1800 633 353 or at www.health.qld.gov.au/public-health/topics/atod/queensland-needle-syringe-program, or check your local council waste disposal guidelines.

Side effects and risks

Ache in your penis

This is a common side effect. It will resolve within a few hours of using the injection. If you find the ache too distressing, please notify us.

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Bruising

Some men experience bruising of the penis after injecting, especially men who take blood thinning medications (eg. warfarin, aspirin, clopidogrel). Apply pressure to injection site after injecting to reduce your risk of bruising.

Infection

Infection is an uncommon side effect of intracavernosal injection. Signs of infection include worsening redness and pain at the injecting site and fevers. If you think you have an infection, please seek attention.

You can reduce your risk of infection by:

- Washing your hands before injecting.
- Using the alcohol wipes as described.
- Using a new needle each time.

Priapism

Priapism is an erection which lasts for more than 4 hours. If this happens it can damage your penis and make your erectile dysfunction worse.

The risk of priapism is approximately 1/200 per injection. The risk is higher if you use too high a dose of the medication or inject more than once in 24 hours.

If you have an erection which lasts more than 2 hours you should:

- Ensure you have orgasmed.
- Have a cold shower and apply an ice pack.
- Do short bursts of exercise eg run up and down the stairs several times.
- Take two 60mg pseudoephedrine tablets as prescribed.
- In business hours, call Brisbane Urology Clinic on 3830 3300 and ask to speak to the nurse.

If you still have an erection after four hours you should:

- Take another two 60mg pseudoephedrine tablets as prescribed, and
- Present to your nearest emergency department. It may be necessary for the blood to be drained from your penis. Failure to do this is likely to cause long term damage to your penis.

Curvature of your penis (Peyronie's disease)

Repeated use of intracavernosal injections can occasionally cause scaring which can result in a bend in your penis and worsening of your erectile dysfunction.

You can reduce your risk of curvature by:

- Alternate the side and site each time you inject.
- Massaging your penis after injection to evenly disperse the medication.

Alternative treatment options

Alternatives to intracavernosal injection for the management of erectile dysfunction include:

- Oral medications (eg. Sildenafil, Tadalafil, Vardenafil, Avanafil).
- Vacuum erection devices.
- Implantable penile prosthesis surgery.
- Sexual activity that does not require an erection.

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Urethral suppositories (MUSE®) are not available in Australia.

Compounding pharmacy information

How do I obtain compounded intracavernosal medication?

We usually use the following compounding pharmacy:

Complementary Compounding Services
1/130 Tamar Street
Ballina NSW 2478
P 02 6686 2244
F 02 6686 2257
E reception@custommedicine.com.au
W www.custommedicine.com.au

Other compounding pharmacies may also provide this service.

You require a prescription for this medication. Once you have a prescription, contact the compounding pharmacy to organise payment and delivery. You will have to post the script to them before they can dispense the medication.

Where do I get needles and alcohol swabs from?

The compounding pharmacy also sells needle packs. Please notify them if you require these. Alternatively, you may be able to purchase syringes and alcohol wipes from your local pharmacy.

How much does the medication cost?

Payment for the medication is made directly to the compounding pharmacy. Please discuss cost with them directly. There may be an additional cost for delivery.

How is the medication delivered?

The medication is shipped to you express in an esky packed with ice. Delivery must be to an address, not a mailbox. Once you receive the delivery, place the medication in the freezer or fridge, depending on the instructions from the pharmacy.

When to seek attention

- If you have an erection lasting more than 4 hours, follow the instructions above and present to your nearest emergency department.
- Please contact Brisbane Urology Clinic, your GP, or present to your nearest emergency department if:
  - You have extensive bruising of your penis.
  - You have signs of infection (fevers and/or worsening redness or pain).
  - You have severe pain.
  - You are unable to pass urine.

To speak with your urologist or one of our specialist urology nurses, phone 07 3830 3300 during business hours.

For urgent after-hours concerns, phone 07 3830 3333 to speak with our on-call urologist

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