

Giving yourself Velcade® (bortezomib) injections

Department of Haematology

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Information for Patients

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Introduction.

This information is for patients who are planning to give themselves Velcade® (also known as bortezomib) or carers who will be giving the injections to patients at home. It is a practical guide on how to give the injections and covers the following:

- What is Velcade® ?
- What is a subcutaneous injection?
- Preparation needed before giving the injection
- Safety and handling requirements
- How to give a Velcade® injection
- After the injection
- Dealing with a spillage
- Contact details

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What is Velcade®?

Velcade® is a one of a group of drugs known as “proteasome inhibitors”. It has been recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) as a treatment for some patients with myeloma. It is not a “traditional” chemotherapy drug but still needs to be treated with great care. It may also be given to patients with amyloidosis, lymphoma or other haematological conditions.

We will give you separate information about the treatment itself.

What is a subcutaneous injection?

Subcutaneous means giving the injection into the fatty tissue layer just under the skin. When you give a subcutaneous injection, you use a short needle to inject into the tissue layer between the skin and the muscle on the abdomen. When positioned correctly the needle injected under the skin will not hit muscle, bone, or any important blood vessels. Subcutaneous injections must not be given into areas where the skin is burned, hardened, inflamed, swollen, bruised or damaged by a previous injection.

Preparation needed before giving the injection

If you would like to give your Velcade® treatment at home, we will provide you and your carer with information and training to make sure you do this safely.

At your outpatient appointment we will give you information to read and time to ask questions. We will show you how to prepare the equipment you need to inject yourself with and give the injection. If you decide you want to go ahead with this, we will provide more training sessions in the outpatient department where you will practise this, supervised by a chemotherapy-trained nurse. You can have as many training sessions as you need.

When you and the supervising nurse agree that you are ready to manage on your own, we will do a final assessment which we will ask you to sign. You will then be able to give the injections at home.

Safety and handling requirements

Please read the instructions below so that you can manage Velcade® safely in your own home and deal with any problems that may arise:

- Velcade® must not be handled by women who could be pregnant, who are trying for a baby, or who are pregnant or breast feeding.
- Velcade® syringes are supplied in sealed plastic bags. It is safe to handle the syringes in the sealed plastic bags, but only people who are trained to handle Velcade® should handle the syringe once it is out of the bag.
- Always make sure that you keep the Velcade® syringes out of sight and reach of children and pets.
- Velcade® needs to be stored in the fridge in a rigid box, away from direct sunlight.
- Remember to keep the spillage information and kit to hand in case you need it.
- You or your carers must report any needle stick injury (where the needle has accidentally pierced or scratched the skin) and seek medical attention immediately.
- If Velcade® comes into contact with the eyes, rinse the eye(s) with plenty of water for at least ten minutes. Contact the 24 hour helpline immediately for further advice.
- All the contact details you need are at the end of this leaflet, including the Day Ward number as well as the 24-hour helpline number.

At the beginning of each treatment cycle we will provide you with sufficient Velcade® syringes for up to seven days, and tell you when to start using them. The syringes are prepared specifically for you with your name on the label, and contain the exact dose of Velcade® prescribed.

How to give a Velcade® injection

Choosing your working environment

You should work in an area where you will not be distracted. Only people who are helping you should be in the room in order to avoid distractions and unnecessary exposure to the drug.

You will need a stable, flat surface to work on that can easily be cleaned, and a comfortable chair with a table beside it. The work surface must be clean and tidy and away from any food or drink.

Do not wear expensive or delicate fabrics when having your chemotherapy treatment in case of spillage.

Equipment and supplies

We will give you all your supplies when you attend your outpatient appointment at the beginning of each course, so you should not run out of anything. However, if you find you are missing any items you should contact Osborne Day Ward (0116 258 5263).

For each injection you will need:

- A cytotoxic (chemotherapy) sharps disposal bin
- An orange needle
- Alcohol/chlorhexidine wipes
- 1 Velcade® syringe
- 1 new clean tissue
- 1 pair of scissors
- A plastic or metal tray that is in good condition with no cracks
- Kitchen roll
- 1 pair of disposable gloves and 1 apron if a carer is going to give the injection

Equipment such as the tray, scissors and kitchen roll should be reserved for giving your chemotherapy only, and should be kept separate from items for normal household use.

Preparing the work area

- Collect all of the above equipment, place on your cleaned area and check that you have all the items you need.
- Wash and dry your hands. If you are a carer giving the drug, you should put on your gloves and apron.
- Check that the outer plastic wrapper of the syringe is labelled with your name and the correct prescribed dose, and that it is in date. (If any of the information is incorrect you must not give the injection. You should contact the hospital immediately).
- If all the information is correct, snip open the outer plastic wrapper of the syringe with the scissors and carefully tip the syringe onto the tray.
- Check the syringe contents to make sure the solution appears clear and colourless like water, with no bits in it. (If it does not look clear or there is anything else wrong with the syringe then do not go any further and contact the hospital immediately).

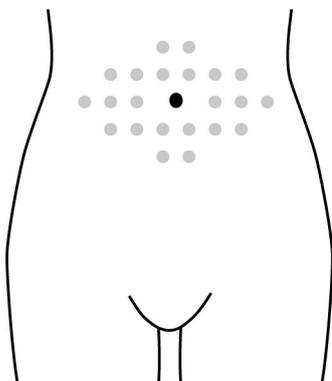
- Peel open the needle packet and place this on the tray.
- Remove the screw stopper at the end of the syringe and then screw the needle onto the syringe without allowing the syringe tip or needle hub to come into contact with anything else. Do not remove the needle cover yet.
- Place the syringe with needle onto the tray.
- Place the alcohol/chlorhexidine wipes, tissue, onto the tray and the sharps bin next to your chair.
- Taking the tray and contents with you, move to your comfortable chair and place the tray on the table beside you.

Giving the Velcade® injection

Ensure that you are sitting comfortably.

- Pick up the syringe by the barrel and loosen (but do not remove) the needle cover. Do not allow the needle to touch the tray or anything else as this will contaminate it. If this happens, then discard the needle into the sharps bin and use a new needle.
- Place the syringe with loosened needle cover back onto the tray.
- Ensure you have a tissue to hand.
- Decide where in the abdomen you will give the injection. You will need to remember to rotate the injection sites each time you give an injection to reduce bruising and discomfort.
- Using a fresh sterile alcohol/chlorhexidine swab, clean the injection site by gently wiping in a spiral motion from the centre outward, being careful not to go back over already clean areas. Allow the cleaned area to dry.
- Pick up the syringe and remove the needle cover. Hold the syringe low down the barrel as if you were going to write with a pen.

Make sure the needle does not come into contact with anything on the way to the skin: this avoids contamination and the risk of introducing infection.



Suggested sites for injection

- With your free hand pinch about an inch (2.5cm) of skin where you are going to inject and insert the needle at a right angle (90 degrees).



- Once the needle is in place, you can release the pinch on the skin if you need both hands to work the syringe. Use one hand to support the syringe and the other hand to push the plunger down slowly until the entire dose has gone in. The needle will deliver the injection just below the skin.
- When the syringe is empty, remove the needle from your skin and place needle and syringe directly into the sharps bin.
- Press the tissue on your skin firmly over the injection site. A small amount of fluid or blood may leak out.
- When there is no more leaking fluid or blood from the skin, remove the tissue and place in the sharps bin.

Safe cleaning and disposal of equipment after the injection

- Do not put any of the used items in with your normal household waste.
- Discard the needle and syringe, tissue, syringe screw stopper, packaging and gloves and apron (if used) into the sharps bin. The bin must be stored out of sight and reach of children and pets.
- Clean the tray and your preparation area thoroughly, wash the scissors, then wash and dry your hands.
- Store tray, scissors and kitchen roll separate from items for general household use.
- Return your used sharps bin to the Outpatient department at your next appointment.

After the injection

There may be a small amount of bleeding or bruising at the injection site. Do not worry, this sometimes happens if the needle has punctured a small blood vessel, and will soon stop and the bruising will fade. Occasionally Velcade® can irritate the skin at the injection site. If this happens then contact Osborne Day Ward department or the 24-hour helpline for advice.

We will provide you with separate information on the other side effects associated with Velcade® treatment.

Dealing with a spillage

The amount of Velcade® in each injection is small but it is possible to accidentally spill it. Keep the spillage kit and instructions at hand whenever you inject and make sure that your carer or family member knows how to use it.

If there is a spillage you must take the following measures to minimise the risks:

- Keep all people out of the spillage area (especially children and pregnant women) except for the person(s) required to clear up the spillage.

If Velcade® has spilt on the skin: immediately hold the affected area under cool running water for ten minutes. Do not scrub because unbroken skin provides protection.

- Wash and dry your hands thoroughly and clean your preparation area and tray with warm soapy water and dry with kitchen roll.
- Open the spillage kit away from the spill area, and follow the instructions in the kit. The spillage kit contains:
 - ⇒ Gloves and apron
 - ⇒ Absorbent material
 - ⇒ Yellow bag for disposal

Do not touch the spill area until you have put on the protective clothing supplied in the spillage kit. The essential items are gloves and apron (the apron should be placed over your head and tied around your waist).

Use the absorbent material in the pack to wipe up any spillage, place in the yellow bag and dispose of directly into the cytotoxic (chemotherapy) sharps bin.

Once the spill area has dried, wash the area with water only, and leave to dry. Do not add any cleaning agent to the spill area. If spillage is on a carpet, after washing allow to dry and then vacuum the area (do not use a steam cleaner).

Contact details:

Osborne Day Ward 0116 258 5263

24 hour emergency helpline 0808 178 2212

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If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk