If you’re giving medicine by injection, it’s very important to know what type of container you’re drawing the medicine from: a single-dose vial or a multiple-dose vial.

You also must understand how to properly use the container you have. Misusing either type of container can be dangerous, with potential to cause serious consequences, including death.

**Single-Dose Vials**

A single-dose vial (SDV) is for use with a single patient for a single injection.

**Safe Use of SDVs**

After giving one dose from an SDV, discard the container. Do not save or use leftover medicine in the vial.

Using leftover medicine from an SDV can cause infection. (SDVs usually lack antimicrobial preservatives, so after the container has been opened, harmful bacteria can grow in the medicine.)

**Multiple-Dose Vials**

A multiple-dose vial (MDV) can be used for a limited period of time: 28 days after it’s been opened or punctured, unless otherwise specified by the manufacturer.

An MDV is identified by a FDA-approved label.

**Safe Use of MDVs**

When you open or puncture an MDV to begin using the medicine inside, assign the container a beyond-use date. The beyond-use date should be 28 days after you start using the vial, unless otherwise specified by the manufacturer. Do not use medicine from the MDV after the beyond-use date.

An MDVs also has an expiration date. No matter when you started using the medicine, do not use it beyond the expiration date.

Before puncturing the rubber top of an MDV, disinfect it by wiping it with a 70-percent isopropyl alcohol solution.

Every time you draw medicine from an MDV, use a new needle and a new syringe. Between uses, do not leave needles or other objects in the vial’s rubber top. They could contaminate the medicine inside.

**Container Sizes**

SDVs and MDVs come in many shapes and sizes. Do not assume that a container is an SDV or an MDV based on its size or the amount of medicine it contains. To determine if your medicine is in an SDV or an MDV, always check the label.

**When to Discard Vials**

Discard an SDV after one use.

Discard an MDV after reaching the beyond-use date or expiration date.

With any vial, if you’re not sure whether the medicine inside is still sterile, do not use the medicine. Discard the container.