

Insulin

This handout is about insulin which is used to control your blood sugar level. It covers how to use it and how to inject it.

Get to know your insulin

- There are fast-acting and long-acting types of insulin
 - Fast-acting insulin works quickly but does not last all day
 - Long-acting takes an hour or more to work but lasts up to 24 hours
 - Many people use more than one type
- There are 3 ways to take insulin
 - A shot (syringe or pen)
 - A pump
 - Inhaled
- Insulin in pill form does not work
- Your doctor will tell you what type and form of insulin is best for you

Circle the insulin you take

- NPH (Humulin, Novolin, Humulin N, Novolin N, Humulin R, Novolin R)
- Lente (Humulin L, Novolin L)
- Glargine (Lantus)
- Lispro or Aspart (Humalog, NovoLog)
- Glulisine (Apidra)
- Exubera (inhaled)

Take care of your insulin

- Keep it in a clean safe place
- Do not let it get too hot or too cold
 - Do not leave in a hot car or on a windowsill
 - Do not put it in the freezer
- When you open a new bottle, check that the date is not expired
- You can keep the bottle at room temperature for 30 days
- Keep it in the refrigerator if you will use it for more than 30 days
- Keep extra insulin in the refrigerator until you are ready to use it

Insulin Cont'd

How often to take it

- Ask your doctor for a plan or schedule
- You may need to take insulin before you eat a meal
- You may need to take insulin at bedtime

How much to take

- Ask your doctor how much insulin is right for you
- Check the syringe to make sure you have the right amount before you inject
 - You may need help getting the right amount of insulin in the syringe
 - Tell your doctor if you need help
 - You may need to get insulin that is already packaged in a syringe
- Sometimes you may need to change how much you take
 - When you are sick with a cold or the flu
 - When you exercise a lot
 - If you get pregnant
 - Ask your doctor how to change your dose

Ways to make the shot less painful

- Have the insulin at room temperature
- Check for no air bubbles in the syringe before you inject
- Do not move the needle during injection
- Do not reuse needles
- If you pinch skin to help inject, do not pinch too tightly

How to fill the syringe

- Get your supplies ready (insulin, syringe, alcohol pads, container for needles)
- Wash your hands with warm soapy water and dry well
- Check to make sure the insulin in the bottle is okay to use
 - Date on the bottle is not expired.
 - Clear insulin looks normal (no big clumps or things floating)
 - Cloudy or mixed insulin looks normal (no big clumps or things floating)
 - You can rub or roll the bottle between your palms to warm the insulin and check how it looks

Insulin Cont'd

- Follow these steps to fill your syringe
 - 1. Place the bottle of insulin on a level surface like the table or counter
 - For new bottles, remove the colored plastic cap
 - 2. Clean the rubber top with an alcohol pad
 - 3. Get the syringe and remove the cap from the needle
 - 4. Pull the plunger on the syringe back to the number of units you will use
 - 5. Put the needle straight into the rubber top and push the plunger all the way down to inject air into the bottle
 - 6. With the needle still in the bottle, turn the bottle and syringe upside down
 - 7. Keeping the needle tip in the liquid, pull the plunger to fill the syringe past your dose of insulin
 - 8. Slowly push the plunger back to your dose of insulin
 - 9. Check for air bubbles. If you see bubbles, inject the insulin back into the bottle and start again at step 4
 - 10. Remove the needle from the bottle and pick an injection spot
- Talk with your doctor or nurse if you have any problems following the steps to inject insulin

Where to inject insulin

- Pick a spot with some fat under the skin
- Usual spots are stomach, outside of upper arm, front/side of thighs, and buttocks
- Different spots on your body will absorb the drug faster
- Pick a spot that matches how fast you want the drug to work
- Insulin works faster if injected near the stomach
- It works slower if injected in the thighs or buttocks
- Ask your doctor or nurse if you have questions about where to inject your insulin

How to inject insulin

- Pick a spot and clean the skin with an alcohol pad
- Gently pull the skin up to help you inject into the fatty part
- Do not inject too deep or into your muscle (it will hurt)
- Do not inject into a vein
- Do not inject too close to a mole, scar, or bruise
- Do not inject in the same spot each time

Insulin Cont'd

When you take insulin for diabetes:

- Do not miss or skip a dose
- Ask your doctor what to do if you miss a dose
- Do not skip meals
- Tell your doctor if you start an exercise program
- Ask your doctor what side effects to watch for
- Ask your doctor what to do if you are sick
- Ask your doctor what to do when you travel
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist how to store your type of insulin
- Inspect your insulin every time. If it is supposed to be clear, make sure it remains clear. And, if it is supposed to be cloudy, make sure it all looks the same
- Keep a few spare bottles of insulin on hand in case of emergency
- Put used needles in a "sharps container" (ask your doctor or nurse)

Tell your doctor about ALL the drugs you take

- Some drugs do not work well with other drugs, herbs, or food
- Tell your doctor if you start a new drug or herb