

Diabetes Education

INSULIN

Your body uses glucose, which is a type of sugar, to give it energy in the same way as a car uses petrol. Insulin is a substance that regulates the amount of glucose in the blood so that you have energy for your daily activities.

You need to take insulin because your body does not produce it or does not produce enough of it to maintain the appropriate level of glucose in your blood. Insulin cannot be taken by mouth, so it has to be injected.

Insulin is a medicine for diabetes

Insulin is a magnificent medicine for treating diabetes. Sometimes it is essential. But it can also be dangerous, as it can make your blood sugar level too low (a state known as hypoglycaemia). If you have too much insulin at any given time, the glucose level in your blood will drop too low. On the other hand, if you do not have very much insulin, especially when you are eating, the glucose level in your blood will go up too high.

It is extremely important for you to follow strictly the instructions given you by your doctor or nurse. If you have any doubts or queries, always ask them.

There are several types of insulin

There are different types of insulin classified according to their strength and the way they act. Your doctor or nurse will give you the one that suits you best depending on your base blood sugar (glucose) level, what you eat and the amount of physical exercise you do.

Never swap your insulin with anyone else. Always use the same amount you have been told to and at the times you have been told to take it.

What happens if my blood sugar level is not normal?

- Go over your consumption of carbohydrates (bread, pasta, fruit, sugar, honey, etc.). Have you taken more or less than usual?
- Go over your physical activity. Have you done more or less physical exercise than usual?
- If your blood sugar level is very low, take some sugar immediately, as you have been told to by your doctor or nurse.



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If you have eaten the same food and done the same exercise as usual, see your doctor or nurse to review the treatment you are following.

Remembering the following points will help you to take your insulin correctly:

- Inject the insulin at the same times (in relation to meals) every day.
- Extract the insulin with great care to make sure you give yourself the right amount.
- Make a note of the exact time and amount of every insulin injection.
- Learn to balance your food, insulin and exercise using the information given you by your doctor or nurse.
- Follow a system to spread the places where you give yourself the injections over different parts of the body. For example, use all the areas on your arms before moving on to your legs. This will help to level the amount of glucose in your blood over time.
- Within a particular area (arm, leg, stomach, buttock) use a different place for each injection. Each injection should be at least an inch away from the previous one.
- If you give yourself more than one injection a day, administer each one in a different area of the body.
- If you are planning to do some exercise, inject the insulin into groups of muscles that you won't be using in that activity. For example, don't inject your thighs before you go running.

What happens if I feel ill after injecting the insulin?

If you feel ill (giddy, sweating, hungry) after injecting yourself with insulin, it may be because your blood sugar level is too low (hypoglycaemia), which is dangerous. If you cannot take a finger-prick test to measure your blood sugar level, take some sugar and go to see your doctor or nurse.

