

Diabetes: Just the Basics

Diabetes Medicines: Insulin

By using insulin, you are taking a very important step in controlling your diabetes. Insulin can help you control your blood sugar, feel better, and improve your long-term health.

Insulin is a hormone made by the pancreas. It is needed to move glucose from your blood to your cells to be used as energy. People who have type 1 diabetes have to take insulin. People who have type 2 diabetes may control their diabetes with pills, but may also take insulin. Insulin can be taken by injection or pump, and sometimes by inhaler. This handout is about insulin that is injected.

Points to know about insulin

- Take your insulin consistently
- If your insulin needs to be mixed, roll it
- Always check the appearance of your insulin before using it. Do not use it if it looks different than it usually does (if there are clumps in it, or if it looks cloudy when it should be clear)
- Keep your insulin in a cool, dry place (refrigerator, not freezer)
- Inject each insulin dose in a different spot (at least two inches from the site of the last dose)
- If you have any questions or concerns about your insulin, call your healthcare provider
- Never skip your insulin unless instructed by your healthcare provider

Your insulin schedule

Basal insulin

These insulins last 8 to 24 hours. They may not need to be taken with a meal. They are frequently taken at bedtime. Ask your healthcare provider when you should take your basal insulin.

Name of Insulin	Number of units to take	When to take

Bolus insulin

These insulins start to work very quickly and are short-acting. They are usually taken with a meal to prevent a large rise in blood sugar. Ask your healthcare provider when you should take your bolus insulin.

Name of Insulin	Number of units to take	When to take

Checking the effect of insulin

You cannot control your blood sugar without checking to see how your insulin is working, and how your body is responding to your activities of the day. So, *talk with your healthcare provider about when you should check your blood sugar and what your blood sugar targets should be and then fill in the charts below.*

Days and Times I will check my blood sugar			
How many days a week should I check my blood sugar? _____			
What times should I check my blood sugar? (circle times below)			
Before breakfast	Before lunch	Before supper	Before bed
2 hours after breakfast	2 hours after lunch	2 hours after supper	2 – 3 am

Target blood sugar ranges

Time	Usual target for most people	My target (write yours here)
Before meals	80 - 120	
2 hours after start of meal	Less than 180	
Bed time	110 - 150	

Storing your insulin

Unopened insulin:
(vials, pens, and cartridges)

- Store in the refrigerator
- Do not freeze
- Do not use after the expiration date

Opened Insulin:

- May keep at room temperature
- Keep away from direct heat and direct light
- Throw out after 1 month

When Traveling:

- Keep with you in a carry-on bag
- Do not let insulin get too hot or cold

Steps To Better Health

- Check your blood sugar regularly
- Call your healthcare provider if you are having trouble drawing up or injecting your insulin
- Call your healthcare provider if you see unusual ups or downs in your blood sugar levels