Insulin

Taking Insulin

If your doctor has told you to start or adjust your insulin dose, have him or her complete this section with you.

Insulin type:
- [ ] Long-acting
- [ ] Mealtime

How to take:
- [ ] Pen
- [ ] Vial & syringe
- [ ] Pump

When to take:
- [ ] Breakfast
- [ ] Lunch
- [ ] Dinner

Where to inject insulin?
Insulin injections are given in the layer of fat just under the skin in these areas of the body:

- Backs of the upper arms
- Abdomen (except a 2-inch circle around your belly button)
- Buttocks
- Thighs (top and outer parts)

Blood sugar goals:
- Fasting ________
- After meal (1-2 hours) ________

If your blood sugar reading is:
- ________ or less
- Between ________ and ________
- ________ or more

Then you should:
- Subtract ___ unit(s)
- Take the same dose
- Add ___ unit(s)

Do not take more than _____ units without talking to your doctor.

Mealtime dose adjustments (if needed):

If your blood sugar reading is:
- ________ or less
- Between ________ and ________
- ________ or more

Then you should:
- Subtract ___ unit(s)
- Take the same dose
- Add ___ unit(s)

Do not take more than _____ units without talking to your doctor.

Adjusting Insulin

Long-acting dose adjustments (if needed):

If your morning blood sugar reading is:
- ________ or less
- Between ________ and ________
- ________ or more

Then you should:
- Subtract ___ unit(s)
- Take the same dose
- Add ___ unit(s)

Do not take more than _____ units without talking to your doctor.
**Starting Insulin**

People with type 1 diabetes have to take insulin to manage their diabetes. However, many people with type 2 diabetes eventually need and benefit from taking insulin.

Starting or adding insulin to your diabetes care plan does not mean that you’ve done anything wrong in managing your diabetes. It just means that your diabetes has changed over time.

**What is insulin?**

Insulin is a naturally occurring hormone secreted by your pancreas. If you are prescribed insulin, it may be because:

- Your body doesn’t produce insulin (type 1 diabetes)
- OR
- Your body doesn’t use it properly (type 2 diabetes)

Insulin cannot be taken as a pill. This is because the acid in your stomach would break it down during digestion, just like the protein in food. So, insulin is usually injected for your body to be able to use it. An inhaled insulin is also available.

**How does insulin work?**

Taking insulin works like your body’s own insulin. It lowers blood sugar by helping sugar move from the blood into your cells.

**Insulin has 3 characteristics:**

- **Onset** is how long it takes for the insulin to start lowering your blood sugar
- **Peak** is the time period when the insulin is at its maximum strength
- **Duration** is how long the insulin continues to work

---

**What is the difference between mealtime and long-acting insulin?**

Each type of insulin helps manage your blood sugar levels. There is not one type that is right for everyone. Each person’s insulin need is different. Some people with type 2 diabetes may use two different types of insulin, mealtime insulin and long-acting insulin.

**Long-acting insulin**

This type of insulin provides steady insulin levels throughout the day and night. It is often taken before bed or first thing in the morning.

**Mealtime insulin**

This type of insulin covers the blood sugar spikes that happen when you eat. It is usually taken just before a meal. You may start taking mealtime insulin with one meal each day. But over time, you may have to take this type of insulin at additional meals.

---

**How do I inject insulin?**

This may be your first time giving yourself an injection. But your diabetes care team will teach you safe and comfortable ways to inject your insulin. You can inject insulin by using:

- An insulin pen
- A syringe filled from a bottle of insulin
- An insulin pump

**Does insulin cause side effects?**

One of the most common side effects of insulin is low blood sugar. The American Diabetes Association defines low blood sugar (or hypoglycemia) as when your blood sugar is less than 70 mg/dL. Ask your diabetes care team what low blood sugar is for you.

**Treat low blood sugar with the 15-15 rule**

- Have 15 to 20 grams of carbohydrates that contain glucose to raise your blood sugar and check it after 15 minutes.
- If it is still low, treatment should be repeated.

Once your blood sugar returns to normal, have a meal or snack to keep low blood sugar from coming back.