

Getting Started with Insulin

Why insulin?

Insulin is often a part of diabetes management to help control blood sugar levels. Getting better control of your blood sugars will improve quality of life and prevent diabetic complications.

Blood Sugar Targets

| | |
|---------------------|---------------|
| Before Meals | 4 – 7 mmol/L |
| 2-hours After Meals | 5 – 10 mmol/L |
| A1C | ≤ 7% |

In some case, your diabetes team may set targets for you that are different than above.

Storage

- Always keep unused insulin in the fridge (2 -8°C). Opened insulin can be kept for **up to 30 days** at room temperature.
- Before putting a new insulin cartridge into your pen, leave it at room temperature for 1-2 hours.
- Keep insulin out of direct sunlight or high temperature. Do not let it freeze.

Driving Guidelines

- Always test before driving!
- If blood sugars <4.0 mmol/L, treat hypoglycemia and wait 45 min. before driving.
- If blood sugars 4.0-5.0 mmol/L, have a snack before driving.

Hypoglycemia

Insulin can cause a low blood sugar. If you are experiencing symptoms of hypoglycemia (dizzy, shaky, sweaty, etc.) check your blood sugar and if it is below **4.0 mmol/L** treat it with **15g of quick sugar**. Talk to your healthcare professional for more information on hypoglycemia.

Injection Sites and Technique

1. Pick Your Site and Rotate

- Inject into fatty tissue (abdomen, arm, thigh, buttock) avoiding scars and bruises. **Do not** inject into muscle.
- Rotate injection sites. Each new injection must be at least 1 finger width away from your last injection.

2. Prime Your Pen (Safety test)

Why?

- Ensures there is no blockage in the needle, the pen works and insulin is flowing correctly.

When?

- Before each injection and after changing cartridges.

How?

- Set the pen for 1 – 2 units. Hold pen/needle pointing upward and press dosage button. Drops of insulin should appear from the needle tip. If not, repeat again.

3. Inject

- Dial the amount of units of insulin required.
- Inject at a 90-degree angle; push dosage button down completely.
- Count to **10 seconds** after injection and check to see a “0” in the dose window before removing pen.
- Unscrew and discard the needle into a sharps container. Use a new needle with each injection.