

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 cases, 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.