

What should I do about my insulin if I am ill?

When you feel ill or stressed your blood glucose level can rise...

HOWEVER, never stop taking your insulin.

- ✓ Test your blood glucose at least 4 times a day, drink plenty of liquids, rest, and eat your regular food if you are able.
- If eating is difficult or if you can't keep food down, have carbohydrate-rich drinks. You should get in contact with the surgery if you have continuous diarrhoea or vomiting, you can't eat for 24 hours, have a high temperature, continue to have high blood glucose levels or if you are not feeling better in 2-3 days

Driving

- By law, you must inform Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA) at Swansea Drivers Medical Group, DVLA, Swansea, SA99 ITU and your Insurance Company, that you are now injecting insulin as a treatment for your diabetes.
- In order to be safe to drive, you must test your blood glucose level before starting your journey and you must re-test every 2 hours during a long journey. Your blood glucose level must be above 5 in order for it to be safe for you to be able to drive



Driver & Vehicle
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Hypoglycaemia (hypo)

- Hypoglycaemia is the medical word for low blood glucose. Hypoglycaemia is often called a 'hypo'.
- The way you feel when your blood glucose is low varies from person to person. A 'hypo' can develop quickly, within minutes. If you start to experience any of these symptoms then please monitor your blood glucose level and if this is 4 or below, then start to treat it as a hypo.

Causes of Hypoglycaemia:

- Too much insulin
- Eating too little or eating less than normal
- More exercise than usual
- Alcohol
- Stress and illness
- Hot weather
- Injecting into a muscle instead of the fatty layer under your skin

When experiencing a hypo you may feel...

- Dizzy
- Sweaty
- Hungry
- Cold
- Faint
- Tired
- Confused
- Irritable
- A pounding heartbeat
- Occasionally you may pass out.

What should I do if my blood glucose level is 4 or below?

- Eat or drink something immediately containing sugar, but not chocolate or biscuits.
- You should have either 5 jelly babies, small can of full sugar pop, 250mls of fruit juice or 5 dextrose sweets.
- You should start to feel better after 5-10 mins.
- Re-test your blood glucose level, and follow up with carbohydrate meal, then retest your blood glucose again after 20 mins.

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Insulin FAQ Leaflet

Insulin – The Background

- Around one in four people with type 2 diabetes take insulin. If you have type 2 diabetes, and are prescribed insulin, it doesn't mean you have type 1 diabetes. You still have type 2 diabetes but your treatment has changed.
- Insulin is used as a treatment for type 2 diabetes, because the insulin your body makes either is not working properly, or the pancreas initially produces more and more insulin to help, but over time the pancreas can become worn out and start to produce less insulin.
- If you need insulin as a medication it isn't your fault and it doesn't mean you haven't managed your diabetes well. It's simply another medication that can help to keep you as healthy as possible. And insulin may be the most appropriate treatment choice for you.
- Many people worry or feel anxious about starting insulin injections. You might be scared of needles, feel squeamish about injecting, worried about pain, or some people feel nervous or embarrassed about injecting in public. If you feel this way, you're not alone. These feelings are natural but can be more serious if they start to impact on how you manage your diabetes, like skipping dose.



Storing Insulin

- Your unused insulin should be stored in the fridge. The pen that is in use does not need to be kept in the fridge. This is because injecting cold insulin can be uncomfortable.
- The pen in use but should be kept away from heat and direct sunlight.
- ✗ Do not use insulin that looks lumpy or is a strange colour.
- ✗ Do not use insulin after the expiry date. If travelling keep your spare insulin in a cooler bag or vacuum flask



Starting Insulin

- You have been prescribed Lantus which is a long acting insulin. You need to only have one injection each day. This injection can be at any time of the day, but this injection must be at the same time each day.
- You will initially be giving yourself 10units of Lantus each day
- You have been prescribed a mixed insulin called Novomix 30. This means in the insulin is 70% long acting insulin and 30% short acting insulin. You must take this insulin twice each day. Once with breakfast and once with your evening meal, this insulin should be taken at the same time each day. This insulin is cloudy in appearance, therefore before you inject this insulin the pen should be gently rolled and inverted (turned upside down) 10 times each until the solution is thoroughly mixed and becomes milky white.
- You will initially be giving yourself 10units of Novomix 30 twice per day, once with breakfast and once with your evening meal.



Your injection kit

To inject insulin safely you'll need:

1. An insulin pen – this already has insulin in which you throw away after it's empty
2. Your needle – this is small and thin, because it only has to go just under the skin, not into a muscle or vein. These can only be used once.
3. A sharps bin – this is where you will safely throw away your needle.



How to inject insulin:

1. Wash and dry your hands.
2. Choose where you're going to inject.
3. Attach the needle to your pen – removing the outer and inner caps (you must change the needle each time you administer insulin) – point your pen upwards and dial up two units of insulin. Keeping your pen upward, press the plunger until a drop of insulin appears from the top of the needle. (If no insulin appears, repeat this step until it does). This is known as priming, and helps regulate your dose by removing any air from the needle and cartridge.
4. Dial your dose and make sure the spot you're injecting is clean and dry. To clean, use soap and warm water. You do not need to use alcohol wipes.
5. Insert the needle at a right angle (90° angle). Press the plunger until the dial goes back to 0.
6. Count to 10, slowly, to give the insulin time to enter your body before removing the needle.
7. Throw away the needle into your sharps bin

Bruising can happen when you catch a tiny blood vessel under the skin where you have injected. It is quite normal for this to happen occasionally when you are injecting regularly and you're not doing anything wrong. You should injection into the fatty areas of your abdomen or thighs. Please do not inject into the same place each day as doing so can cause lumps underneath your skin, which may stop the insulin working correctly.