How to Give an Insulin Injection

Insulin pens

Getting started
- Gather the equipment (insulin pen and pen needles, alcohol pad if you use one).
- Wash hands with soap and water.
- If NPH or NPH-mix insulin (cloudy insulin), roll insulin pen between hands to mix.

Basic steps for an insulin pen
- Remove the pen cap.
- Remove paper protective tab from the pen needle and screw the pen needle onto the pen.
- Remove the outer plastic pen needle cap and the inner needle cap.
- You may throw the inner needle cap away.
- Dial the pen to 2 units of insulin.
- With the needle tip pointing up, press the button on the end of the pen until some insulin appears. This is called an “air shot.”
- If no drops of insulin appear, repeat the “air shot” until a drop of insulin appears. If you do not see any insulin, do not use the pen.
- Set your insulin dose: Be sure the dial is set at “0,” then dial to the number of units you need.
- The pen can be dialed either up or down to the correct dose.
- If the dose is for more than the number of units left in the pen, you cannot set the dose.

Giving the injection
- It is important to give the injection correctly so you make sure you get the right amount of insulin. It also will be less painful.
- Clean skin with soap and water (or wipe with alcohol pad) and let dry.
- Pick up pen and do not let the needle touch anything.
- Pinch up your skin at the injection site.
- Push the needle into your skin fold.
- Push the button on the end of the pen down as far as it will go.
- Keep the button pressed and count slowly to 5 before taking the needle out (to make sure you get all of the insulin).
- Pull the needle out.
- Replace the outer needle cap.
- Twist off the capped pen needle and put it in a “sharps” container.
- Replace the pen cap on the pen for storage.
- Don’t worry if there is a tiny amount of bleeding. Just put pressure on the injection site for about 30 seconds.
- You should not have a lump on your skin after you give your insulin. If this is happening, you might need a longer needle or might need to change how you give your insulin.

Syringes and needles that are used in the hospital might be different from the ones you use at home. Be sure to learn how to use your injection device correctly so you get the right amount of medicine. Your nurse, doctor or diabetes educator can help you learn how to use your equipment.
How to Give an Insulin Injection

Insulin bottle and syringe

Getting started
• Gather the equipment (insulin pen and pen needles, alcohol pad if you use one).
• Wash hands with soap and water.
• If NPH or NPH-mix insulin (cloudy insulin), roll insulin bottle between hands to mix.

Basic steps for syringe/bottle (filling a syringe from an insulin bottle)
• Remove the cap from the syringe.
• Pull the plunger down to let air in (equal to the amount of insulin you will take).
• Push needle through the top of the insulin bottle.
• Push the air in the syringe into the bottle. Leave the needle in the bottle.
• Turn the bottle and syringe upside down so the needle tip is covered by insulin.
• Pull the syringe plunger back slowly to get insulin in the syringe.
• Look for air bubbles in your syringe (air bubbles mean you will get less insulin).
• If you see air bubbles, push the insulin back in and pull back out. Do this until you have no bubbles.
• Measure the exact amounts of insulin (units) ordered.
• Pull needle out of bottle.

Giving the injection
• It is important to give the injection correctly so you make sure you get the right amount of insulin. It also will be less painful.
• Clean skin with soap and water (or wipe with alcohol pad) and let dry.
• Pick up syringe like a pencil and do not let the needle touch anything.
• Pinch up your skin at the injection site.
• Push the needle into your skin fold.
• Push the insulin in with the plunger. Count slowly to 5 before taking the needle out (to make sure you get all of the insulin).
• Pull the needle out.
• Put the syringe in a “sharps” container.
• Don’t worry if there is a tiny amount of bleeding. Just put pressure on the injection site for about 30 seconds.
• You should not have a lump on your skin after you give your insulin. If this is happening, you might need a longer needle or might need to change how you give your insulin.

Syringes and needles that are used in the hospital might be different from the ones you use at home. Be sure to learn how to use your injection device correctly so you get the right amount of medicine. Your nurse, doctor or diabetes educator can help you learn how to use your equipment.

Illustrations courtesy of © Becton, Dickenson and Company

The information presented is intended for general information and educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care provider. Contact your health care provider if you believe you have a health problem.