How to give yourself an insulin injection*

All people with type 1 diabetes and a large number of people with type 2 diabetes will eventually need to inject themselves with insulin. All people starting insulin should sit down with their diabetes educator, pharmacist, or doctor to learn the proper injection technique. These experts can teach you, watch you, and help you master insulin injections.

Here are the basic steps to giving yourself an insulin injection*:

1. Check the type and expiry date of your insulin. (Learn how to store your insulin properly. Insulin that is not being used should be kept in the fridge. Insulin that is currently being used can stay at room temperature for up to a month on average.)

2. Wash both your hands and the area to be injected with regular soap, then rinse off the soap residue with water. You do not need to wipe the area with alcohol, although this was recommended in the past.

3. Choose your injection site, as recommended by your health care team. It is important to rotate your injection sites (this means regularly changing the injection spot). Your diabetes educator can give you some tips on how to do this.

4. If you are using a type of insulin that is normally cloudy, rotate it in your hand to mix it up (if your insulin is normally clear and it appears cloudy, discard it).

5. a) For insulin syringe users:
   ► Attach a pen needle.
   ► Dial up the right number of units on the pen.

   b) For insulin syringe users:
   ► Draw up the right number of units of air into the syringe.
   ► Inject the air into the insulin vial.
   ► Turn the vial upside down and draw up the right number of units of insulin.
   ► Pull the needle out of the bottle.
   ► Tap the syringe so air bubbles go to the top and they can be pushed out.

6. Ask your diabetes educator whether you should pinch your skin before inserting the needle.

7. Hold the syringe or insulin pen the same way you would hold a pencil. Keep your grip close to the needle end so that the pen or syringe is easier to control.

8. Insert the needle (from the syringe or pen) at a 90-degree angle into the skin.

9. Push the plunger or the end of the pen to inject the insulin into the fat layer just under the skin.

10. Slowly count to five to lower the chance of insulin leakage.

11. Pull out the needle and dispose of it in the proper sharps container.

*There are many different types of insulin. This information is intended to provide general instructions for the use of insulin. Specific instructions may vary for different products. If these instructions are different from those given by your doctor or pharmacist, check with your doctor or pharmacist to confirm how you should be using the product. Consult your doctor or pharmacist for specific information about your particular medication.
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