



Diabetes *it's in your hands*

Insulin

Insulin injections are required when the body produces little or no insulin, as with type 1 diabetes. They are also required for some people with type 2 diabetes when diabetes tablets, together with healthy eating and regular physical activity, are not enough to control blood glucose levels.

- Insulin is a hormone made by cells in the pancreas and controls the level of glucose (sugar) in the body
- With diabetes, the body doesn't make enough insulin and glucose stays in the blood where it can cause problems in the heart, brain, kidneys, eyes and nerves (foot problems).

When do I need insulin?

- Insulin injections are needed by all people diagnosed with type 1 diabetes
- People diagnosed with type 2 diabetes may also require insulin if tablets, together with healthy eating and regular exercise, are not enough to control their blood glucose levels
- Insulin cannot be given in tablet form as it is destroyed by the stomach juices.

What if I have to go on to insulin?

For people with diabetes, starting on insulin can be difficult and frightening. Your doctor, diabetes educator or Aboriginal Health Worker will be there to help you understand everything you need to know and do.

You must eat in the morning, middle of the day and at night everyday when you have insulin injections.

Where is insulin injected?

- Insulin is injected into the tummy, thighs, upper arms or buttocks
- It is important to inject insulin in a slightly different spot each day to avoid causing lumps underneath your skin, but don't change the area of the body you inject without first talking with your doctor or diabetes educator
- Don't inject insulin immediately after taking it out of the fridge. Allow it time to reach room temperature, or roll it between your hands until it warms up
- It is important to test your device before each injection to make sure it works properly - your doctor or health professional will show you how.



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If you register with the National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS) you can get free needles and syringes, as well as discounted testing strips and other equipment. Call 1300 136 588 or visit www.ndss.com.au for more details.

How do I store insulin?

- Keep your insulin in a refrigerator, but do not freeze it
- Once the insulin vial or pen has been opened it can be kept at room temperature for up to one month
- Insulin may be damaged by high temperatures. It must not be left where temperatures are over 25 degrees (for example: in the car, even on a cloudy day)
- Protect your insulin from direct sunlight.

Do not use insulin if:

- it has expired
- you are experiencing a low blood glucose level (a 'hypo') when the dose is due. Treat the 'hypo' first then give insulin
- the clear insulin has turned cloudy
- the insulin has been frozen or exposed to high temperatures
- the insulin solution has thickened, coloured or has solid bits in it
- there are deposits on the inside of the insulin vial which cannot be dissolved by gently rotating the vial
- a vial or cartridge has been opened for more than one month.

What is the best way to get rid of used syringes or pen needles?

In an Australian Safety Standards approved **sharps container** which is puncture proof and has a secure lid. These are usually available through local councils or your Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation.

For more information phone 1300 136 588 or visit www.diabetesvic.org.au

