

Patient Information

**Information for Patients
new to Insulin
For 16 years and above**

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This leaflet is for patients who have recently started on insulin for managing their diabetes.

There are three important skills you need to be able to do before you are sent home these are as follows:

1. Be able to use a blood glucose/ketone meter
2. Be able to inject your insulin
3. Be familiar and know how to treat a low blood sugar (less than 4mmols, this often called a "hypo")

If you are unable to do all these skills yourself the nurses on the ward will refer you to the district nurses to help when you are at home.

The points below are to help you manage your diabetes

- Check your blood sugars four times daily (before meals & before bed) and write the result in your blood glucose diary.
- Move and change your injection sites. (where you put your insulin into your body)
- Never stop taking your insulin (unless instructed to by one of the Diabetes Team).

What to do if you are having a ‘hypo’

- If your blood sugar is low below 4mmols and you feel “hypo” you may get symptoms such as feeling shaky, sweaty, tingling lips, hungry, or blurred vision; take some fast acting sugar then have something more “starchy” (carbohydrate) to eat.

You will need to choose one of the following foods from section A, and one from section B

A. Fast acting sugar:

- One glass of sugary drink such as Ribena (original) or Lucozade(not sport)
- 3-4 dextrose energy tablets
- Two teaspoons sugar, honey or jam.

THEN ↓

B. Long acting carbohydrate(starchy food)

- One glass of milk and a biscuit,
- A slice of toast
- A Half of a sandwich (one slice)
- A plain scone.

- To sum up: for hypo treatments take fast acting sugar first followed by something more filling/longer acting.
- Re-check your blood sugar after 20 minutes; if it is still below 4mmols repeat steps A and B. If you keep having hypo’s contact your diabetes nurse or doctor as your insulin dose may need reducing.

What to do if your blood sugars are high

- If your blood sugars are running **high** more than 18mmols test your blood for ketones (if you have a meter that can do both blood glucose and blood ketones). Ketones are a sign that there is not enough insulin in your body and that you need more insulin.
- If you have type 1 diabetes and your blood ketone level is high speak to your GP or diabetes nurse for help with adjusting your insulin doses

What to do if you feel unwell

- If you are unwell your blood sugars are likely to be higher. This means you will need more insulin even if you are eating less and doing less. If you are on a long acting insulin called Levemir/detemir or Lantus/glargine you must continue to take this. Contact your diabetes nurse or doctor for help if you keep getting high readings.
- If you have type 1 diabetes you may need to check your ketones before you reach a blood sugar of 18mmols particularly if you are unwell.
- If you are unwell you may be asked to follow the “sick day rules” these should have been talked about with your diabetes nurse.
- If you are vomiting and have high blood ketones more than 3mmols you will need to return to the hospital immediately. Do **NOT** stop taking your insulin; if you come to hospital bring your insulin and blood sugar/glucose diary with you.

General information

- Depending on the type of insulin you are on you may be asked to have a bedtime snack choose something “starchy” for example two plain biscuits, a slice of toast, or slice of bread.
- Your insulin will become unstable 28 days after opening – you should not use it after 28 days. It can be kept outside the fridge for this time at room temperature (though not on a windowsill in direct sunlight, on a frosty windowsill or over a radiator). All spare insulin must be kept in the fridge to ensure it keeps to its expiry date.
- When you have been home for a couple of days please ring the Maple unit Diabetes Nurses on (01908) 243089 and leave your name and telephone number on the answer phone. They will ring you back as soon as possible to talk about your blood sugars and insulin doses. The Diabetes Nurses are only there during office hours (not open over weekends or bank holidays)
- If you find all your blood sugars are low (below 4 mmols) over a weekend or a bank holiday you will need to cut both morning and evening insulin doses down and then ring the diabetes nurses as soon as the office is open. If you are worried you can contact the Novo Nordisk helpline 0845 600 5055.
- You can ring the **Novo Nordisk helpline** out of hours and bank holidays if you are having problems
0845 600 5055
Mon to Fri 5.30pm – 11.00pm
Weekends & public holidays 8.30am – 11.00pm

Other useful helplines/websites:

- Lilly-Tel 01256 315000 www.lillydiabetes.co.uk for medical enquires
- Abbott-Tel 0500 467 466
www.abbottdiabetescare.co.uk for technical enquires
- Sanofi Aventis-Tel 01483 505515, 08000 352525
www.diabetesmatters.co.uk for technical enquires
- Diabetes Uk careline -0845 120 2960
www.diabetes.org.uk

Notes

We ask information about you so that you can receive proper care and treatment. This information remains confidential and is stored securely by the Trust in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

**Author: Diabetes ANP
Date written: May 2012
Review Date: 12/2015
Version No: GENM/PI/14**

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