

Self-administration of insulin in hospital

Patient information factsheet

People with diabetes tend to be very knowledgeable about their condition. If you have diabetes, you will often know more than anyone else about how much insulin you require in different situations.

In hospital your medication and injections will usually be given to you by a nurse. We recognise, however, that you may prefer to inject your own doses of insulin, like you do at home. This is known as self-administration of insulin.

Can I self-administer my insulin?

Self-administration of insulin can lead to better timing of doses and better blood glucose levels.

However, insulin can be dangerous if an incorrect dose is administered. Your nurse will need to assess whether it is safe for you to administer your own insulin doses while you're in hospital. It may not be safe if you are very unwell or if other changes have been made to your treatment.

For example, sometimes in hospital, you might be given medications, such as steroids, which may affect your blood glucose level. During this time, it may not be safe for you to administer your usual insulin doses.

The nurse will also need to ask you some questions to check that you understand insulin, the doses you need and how to do your injections.

If the nurse feels that it is safe for you to self-administer your insulin, they will ask you to sign an assessment form to confirm that you are happy to do so. If you have any questions, please ask the nurse before you sign.

If it is not safe for you to self-administer your insulin, a nurse will give you your doses instead.

If your condition changes in hospital, (for example, if you need to have an operation) the nurse will reassess you and check that it's still safe for you to self-administer during that time.

Do I have to self-administer my insulin?

If you would prefer, the nurse can continue to give you your insulin. They can reassess you again at another time if you'd like to start administering your own insulin during your hospital stay.

Can I monitor my own blood glucose level?

We will monitor your blood glucose using the ward meters which are very accurate, but you can also use your own meter if you want to.

Tell your nurse if the blood glucose reading on your meter is less than 4mmol or higher than 12mmol and they will check the result on the ward meter

Insulin safety

For your safety and the safety of the other patients, you must:

- store your insulin out of sight in your bedside locker in the plastic box provided
- dispose of any used needles immediately after use in the yellow sharps container provided. Do not leave needles attached to your pen.
- record the dose of insulin that you gave on the insulin chart provided to you (you can also record your blood glucose readings on this chart)
- make sure that you have enough insulin and needles and tell your nurse if you are running low

When you return home, store any spare insulin pens back in your fridge. The one you are using can be kept out of the fridge for up to one month.