



**DiABETES UK**  
KNOW DIABETES. FIGHT DIABETES.

# DIABETES AND INSULIN

The essentials

# DIABETES AND INSULIN

**One in eleven adults in the world has diabetes, which causes too much sugar – or glucose – in the blood.**

There are two main types of diabetes, type 1 and type 2, but diabetes may also appear temporarily during pregnancy (gestational diabetes) and more rarely in other circumstances.

Researchers are leaving no stone unturned in their effort to prevent or cure diabetes. But, currently, the main aim of treatment is to manage blood sugar levels to prevent damage to the eyes, kidneys, nerves, heart and blood vessels.

On top of a healthy lifestyle, people with type 1 – and some people with type 2 or gestational diabetes – need insulin to help manage their blood sugar levels.

These **Insulin Essentials** set out the care and support you should expect, whether you're new to insulin or have been using it for a while. Knowing these essentials will help keep you safe and well.

You should discuss these essentials with your healthcare professional – this could be the doctor, nurse, pharmacist or other professional who helps you manage your diabetes – at least once a year, but sooner and more often if you wish.

# THE ESSENTIALS

## 1 Understanding your insulin doses or regimen

There are different ways to use and combine insulins, called regimens. When you start or review your insulins, you should agree with your healthcare professional the best regimen to meet your personal needs and lifestyle. If you have any questions, they should be answered to your satisfaction.



## 2 Feeling comfortable and confident about injecting

When you start insulin, you should do the first injection with your healthcare professional. This could be a test injection or your first insulin injection. You should feel comfortable about your insulin injections and be able to adjust your insulin doses with confidence.

## 3 Understanding how to monitor your blood sugar levels

Your healthcare professional should show you how to test and record your blood sugar levels. They should explain your numbers, your target ranges and when to monitor your blood sugar levels.



## 4 Understanding and using your blood sugar readings or data

Your healthcare professional should review your blood sugar data with you and use this to guide your care and treatment. You should be shown how to download or record and understand your own blood sugar readings, to help your self-management.



## 5 Having the equipment you need and knowing how to use it

Your healthcare professional should show you and explain the different pieces of equipment you need to inject your insulin and monitor your blood sugar safely. They should also explain how to safely dispose of sharps, like needles. Arrangements should be made for you to easily re-order your equipment on prescription.



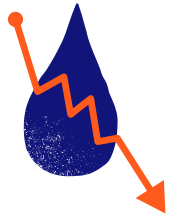
## 6 Looking after your injection sites

Your healthcare professional should demonstrate how and where to inject. Rotating your injection site is important to reduce the risk of developing lumpy areas. Your injection sites should be discussed and your healthcare professional will want to check your injection sites from time to time. This is particularly important if your blood sugar control deteriorates or is erratic for no obvious reason.



## 7 Understanding and managing hypoglycaemia

Your healthcare professional should discuss how to recognise and manage low blood sugar levels, also called hypoglycaemia or hypos. How many hypos you've had and how well you recognise them should also be discussed at your annual review, or earlier and more often if you're concerned.



## 8 Managing insulin when you're unwell

Your healthcare professional should discuss what you need to know if you're unwell and how to use so-called 'sick day rules'. Ideally, you should be given written information or be told where to find it.

[Click here to find out more about managing diabetes when unwell.](#)



## 9 Safe driving and insulin therapy

Taking into account your job and lifestyle, your healthcare professional should discuss driving regulations and what these mean for you. This should include any legal requirements about driving, self-monitoring of blood sugar and hypoglycaemia.

[Click here to find out more about diabetes and driving.](#)





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**Access to the right technology for you**

Technology can be an important part of how you manage your diabetes. Your healthcare professional can advise on what tech might suit you best. You may be able to get it prescribed free through the NHS.

[Click here to find out more about the different tech available and how to access it.](#)



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**Access to specialist dietary advice**

If you're starting insulin or having difficulty managing your blood sugar levels, you should be able to access specialist dietary advice if needed, to support your self-management.



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**Access to ongoing support around insulin and diabetes**

You should be able to access additional support and talk to other people with diabetes if you wish. This may be available locally or via Diabetes UK.



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**Access to emotional support**

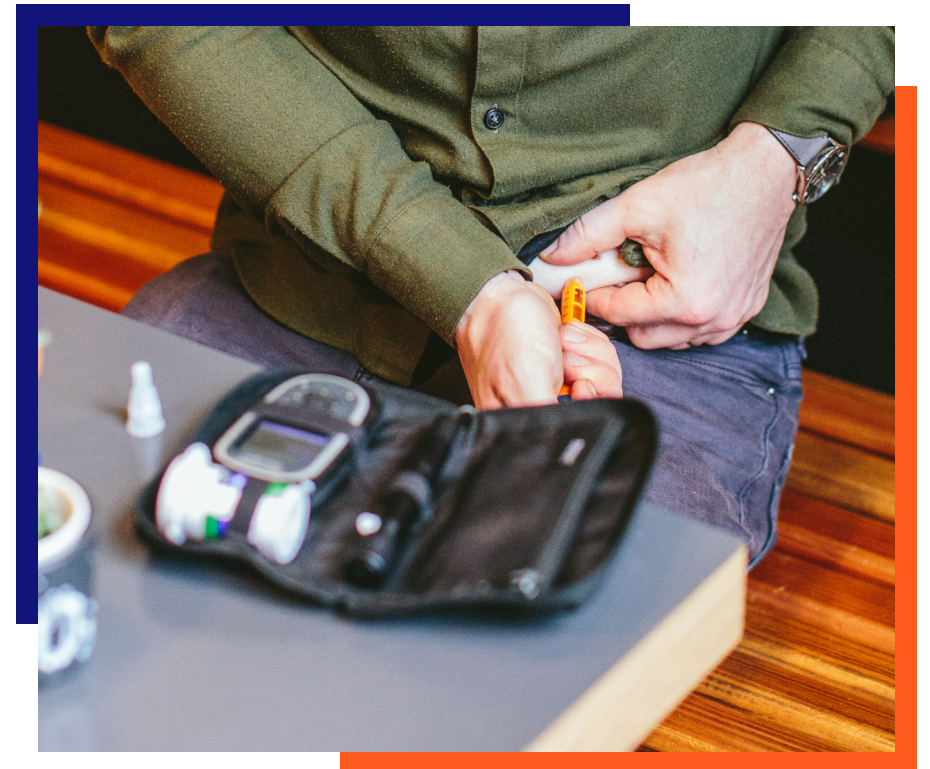
Just like everyone else, people with diabetes may experience anxiety, depression or distress, and sometimes these feelings relate to diabetes. This can make self-management more difficult. You should be able to talk about your emotional wellbeing with your healthcare professional, and be able to access specialist support if you need it.



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**Access to other specialist advice when needed**

You should be referred for appropriate specialist help and advice if your healthcare professional can't help with a particular issue you're experiencing.



# USEFUL LINKS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Click here to read about insulin on the Diabetes UK website](#)

[Click here to visit the Diabetes UK learning zone](#)

Call the Diabetes UK helpline

**0345 123 2399, Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm**

Or email

[helpline@diabetes.org.uk](mailto:helpline@diabetes.org.uk)

This is a draft version which is currently being tested. We would appreciate any feedback you wish to provide on its content, usefulness and impact. Please email any feedback to [rachel.martin@diabetes.org.uk](mailto:rachel.martin@diabetes.org.uk) or call 07721 261165.

Thank you.



**Diabetes Leeds Partnership**

The NHS in Leeds and Leeds Clinical Commissioning Group working together

The British Diabetic Association operating as Diabetes UK, a charity registered in England and Wales (no. 215199) and in Scotland (no. SC039136). © Diabetes UK 2020

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