



Starting Insulin in Pregnancy Patient Information Leaflet

July 2020

Why do I need insulin?

It is important for you and your baby that your blood glucose stays below 5.3 mmol before breakfast, and below 7.8 mmol one hour after meals for the remainder of your pregnancy. You will have made changes to your diet and may also have been taking Metformin tablets and you will be asked to continue these changes. However, despite these positive changes you have made, the increasing hormone levels in pregnancy means that your body now needs some extra insulin to help keep your blood glucose at the recommended level.

What is insulin?

Insulin is a naturally occurring hormone which helps regulate blood glucose levels. During pregnancy women need to produce more insulin because of the extra demands on the body. Some women have to take insulin to help keep their blood glucose levels inside the recommended glucose ranges.

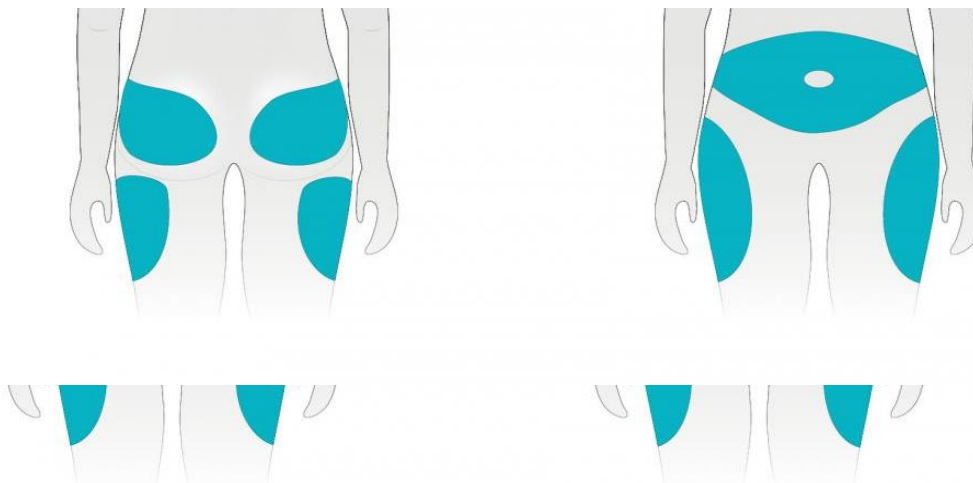
How will I give insulin?

Insulin is given by an injection – you will be taught this technique by the Diabetes Specialist Nurse

The diagram below shows you the recommended sites for insulin injection these are:-

- In the tummy area, at least 2.5cm (1 inch) from the belly button
- The upper outer area of thigh
- The top of buttocks (bottom)

You will be advised to use a different skin site each day to avoid the area becoming sore or lumps forming under the skin, and the injection should be performed at 90 degrees to the skin.



Different Types of Insulin

Depending on your blood glucose patterns you may be asked to take different types of insulin at different times in the day.

Meal Time insulin

This will be recommended if your 1 hour blood glucose measurements are above 7.8mmol/l despite changes to diet/lifestyle and oral medication.

This insulin should be given 10-15 minutes before you eat and will stay in your blood stream for 4-6 hours to help your body to deal with the carbohydrates eaten during the meal.

Examples of this type of insulin are **Novorapid Humalog Apidra**

Long Acting insulin

This will be recommended if your fasting blood glucose levels are above 5.3mmol/l despite changes to diet/lifestyle and oral medication.

This insulin is usually given before you go to bed (it can occasionally also be given on waking up). This insulin lasts 18-24 hours and is absorbed slowly over the day.

Examples of this type of Insulin are **Humulin I Lantus Levemir**

Insulin Storage-

There are some important Dos and Don'ts when it comes to storing your insulin:

DO

- Keep spare pens in the fridge
- Keep the pen you are using keep at room temperature
- The pen you are using can be kept out of the fridge for 28 days then it will need replacing.

DO NOT

- **Allow the insulin to freeze**
- **Allow the insulin to come into contact with direct sunlight**
- **Store the insulin in a warm place, for example, above a radiator**

Managing blood glucose levels –

If your blood glucose levels are **above target** for example, your fasting levels are above 5.3 mmol/l on three occasions **OR** your post meal levels are above 7.8 mmol/l on three occasions, please contact your diabetes team for advice,

What if I have a low blood glucose level?

A blood glucose less than 4mmol/l is called **Hypoglycaemia**

How will I feel? - When your blood glucose level drops you may feel

- Dizzy
- Sweaty
- Hungry
- Confused
- Cold
- Light headed
- Irritable
- Palpitations – a fast heart beat

What causes hypoglycaemia?

- Too much insulin
- Eating too little or less than normal
- More activity than usual
- Alcohol
- Stress/illness
- Hot weather

What should I do when my glucose is less than 4mmol/l ?

You will need to take 15-20 g of fast acting carbohydrates to raise your blood glucose levels – this can be either

- **200mls Lucozade**
- **150mls Full sugar coke**
- **200mls Fresh orange juice**
- **4-5 Jelly babies**
- **5-6 Glucose tablets**

Wait 10 minutes then re – check your blood glucose level, if still **less than 4mmol/l** repeat the above

If less than 4mmol/l you may need a small snack if your next meal is not due for example, 1 plain biscuit or a small piece fruit.

Driving and Insulin and the DVLA

As your insulin will be temporary to control your blood glucose levels in your pregnancy you may continue to drive without informing the DVLA

However you must notify the DVLA if you have disabling hypoglycaemia or if your treatment lasts for more than 3 months

To ensure you are safe to drive :-

1. Check your blood glucose every 2 hours and ensure this is more than 5 mmol/l
2. If 4-5 mmol/l – have a small snack and wait and check that your blood glucose is more than 5 mmol/l
3. If your blood glucose is less than 4 mmol/l – follow the hypoglycaemia guidelines above – however you must then wait **45 minutes before you can drive**

Contact us:

Diabetes Specialist Midwife – 0161 922 4891

Diabetes Specialist Nurse – 0161 366 2354

Maternity Triage – 0161 922 6175

Diabetes Email – tga-tr.anc@nhs.net

The use of insulin in pregnancy is recommended by www.nice.org.uk/guidance - Clinical Guideline NG3 Diabetes in Pregnancy
For further information visit www.diabetes.org.uk

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If you have a visual impairment this leaflet can be made available in bigger print or on audiotape. If you require either of these options please contact the Patient Information Centre on 0161 922 5332

If you require an interpreter, please ask an appropriate person to contact our central booking office between Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm on 0161 922 6991 to arrange this for you.

語言翻譯及病者支持服務 (LIPS):

如果閣下需要翻譯員在您的預約當日幫助您的話 請找一名合適的家庭成員 0161 922 6991 聯絡本中央預約辦事處來您您安排 我們的辦公時間是星期一至星期五 上午 8 時至下午 5 時

Językowo Tłumaczeniowa Usługa Pomocy dla Pacjenta (Language, Interpretation and Patient Support Service LIPS):

Jeśli potrzebujesz pomocy tłumacza w trakcie swojej wizyty, proszę poprosić odpowiedniego członka rodziny o skontaktowanie się z Centralnym Biurem Zamówień (Central Booking Office), w celu zorganizowania tłumacza pomiędzy poniedziałkiem a piątkiem w godzinach od 08:00 - 17:00 pod numerem 0161 922 6991.

لیٹگوئج، انٹریپریٹیشن اینڈ پیٹینٹ سپورٹ سروس (Lips)

اگر آپ کو اپنی اپائنٹمنٹ کے لئے مترجم کی مدد کی ضرورت ہو تو براہ مہربانی اپنے خاندان کے کسی موزوں فرد سے کہیں کہ وہ ہمارے سنٹرل بنگ آفس سے پیر سے جمعہ 8.00 بجے صبح سے 5.00 بجے شام کے دوران 0161 922 6991 پر فون کر کے اس کا بندوبست کریں۔

Document control information

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