

Starting Insulin for the First Time

Gestational / Type 2 Diabetes

- Insulin helps transport glucose from the blood into the body cells for energy. Blood glucose levels remain higher than normal when insulin is unable to work properly (insulin resistance).
- During pregnancy, women make 2-3 times more insulin to keep blood glucose levels normal.
- Most women with Type 2 diabetes and 25% of women with gestational diabetes need insulin injections during pregnancy to maintain blood glucose levels.
- Regular activity plus eating the right foods at meals and snacks will often maintain blood glucose levels but some women need extra insulin. Discuss this with your dietitian.
- Insulin can only be given by injection, just under the skin.
- If you have had gestational diabetes, you will most likely not need insulin injections after your baby is born.

The diabetes educator will teach you about:

- The type (and action) of insulin you are using, ie rapid / intermediate / long acting insulin.
- The correct dose of insulin using an insulin device.
- Care for your insulin, pen and needles.
- Adjusting your insulin dose according to blood glucose levels.
- Recognising low blood glucose reactions (hypos), how to treat them and how to avoid getting them.
- Renewing your script for more insulin.
- Disposal of needles (sharps) safely.

Hypoglycaemia (hypo) - blood glucose less than 4mmol/L

Once insulin has been commenced there is a slight chance of a 'hypo' or low blood glucose.

Symptoms	Causes
Hunger	Missing meals/snacks
Light headedness	Too much exercise
Sweating	Too much insulin
Shaking	
Tingling around the lips	



How to treat a hypo

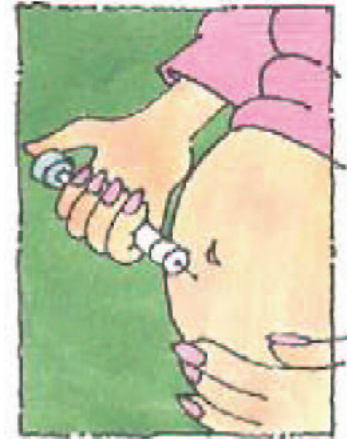
- Eat or drink something sweet (fast attack) e.g. six jelly beans or a glass of normal (not diet) soft drink.
- Also eat something long lasting e.g. a sandwich or crackers.

How to avoid a hypo

- Try to identify the cause
- Be prepared: carry a food snack night and day

Some important things to remember when you start using insulin during your pregnancy

- Aim to take your cloudy (long acting) insulin at the same time each day.
- Aim to maintain your blood glucose between 4-7 mmol/L.
- Wash your hands before you test your blood or inject insulin.
- Roll cloudy insulin between your hands to mix before using.
- Test your blood glucose level two hours from starting your meal.
- Change your lancet after each use.
- Dispose of your lancets and syringes in a safety 'sharps' container and return the container to the hospital when your baby is born. **Please DO NOT throw 'sharps' into the rubbish bin.**
- Inject insulin into your stomach - away from your navel area, as shown. It is important to rotate the site of your injections.
- Store your unused insulin in the door of the refrigerator.
- Have spare insulin in the refrigerator at all times.



Reduce your risk of future diabetes with a balanced lifestyle

A balanced lifestyle means:

- a healthy diet
- regular exercise
- maintaining your weight within your healthy weight range.

Remember to have your glucose tolerance test 8-12 weeks after your baby is born, then every two years.

This information is available in alternative formats upon request

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