

How should you get *your* insulin?



Your comfort matters!

The more comfortable you are with your insulin-delivery method, the easier it will be for you to follow your treatment plan—and bring your blood sugar into line. If you're unhappy with your current method, consider switching with your healthcare provider's guidance.

When you have type 1, there's no way around it: Insulin is a must. But today, not only are there more types of insulin than ever (greater than 20!), there are also more ways to take it! So how do you know which delivery method is best for your lifestyle and personal preferences? Read on, then talk to your diabetes care team about the pros and cons of each type.

Cost-conscious?

Consider a syringe

Syringes are usually the cheapest route. But that's not the only benefit. Syringes now feature very fine short needles with a special coating, making injections almost painless. Plus, if you take more than one type of insulin, you can use the same type of syringe for each one. You can even mix certain types of insulin in a single syringe. However, with a syringe, you'll need to carry insulin vials with you, and manually fill syringes with the correct dose.

A syringe may be right for you if ...

- ☐ Cost is an issue
- ☐ You prefer one method for taking different types of insulin
- ☐ You want to be in total control of your dosing

Make sure to: Find a syringe whose lines markings you can read easily, use needles only once, dispose of sharps properly.

Want a no-fuss method?

Check out a pen

If you have trouble filling syringes accurately, have dexterity issues or hate fumbling with vials and syringes when

in public, pens might be just the thing. You can opt for a disposable pre-filled type or a reusable pen that uses insulin cartridges. When it's time to use, you attach a needle, turn the dial for the correct dose and inject. Some pens also have a memory recall feature that keeps track of your insulin usage.

A pen may be right for you if ...

- ☐ You want a method that's convenient and discreet
- ☐ You want a device that measures

your dose automatically

- ☐ You want a memory tracker

Make sure to: Check with your insurance provider to find out about any out-of-pocket costs for pens, ask manufacturer for discount programs, use new needles every time.

Struggling to get your blood sugar into line?

A pump may be best

Does your blood-sugar log look like a roller coaster? Have trouble matching your insulin needs to your food intake and activity levels? Hate injecting multiple times a day? Consider a pump. This small device is worn on the body and uses a cannula to deliver insulin into your body. It automatically releases basal insulin over 24 hours, and then when it's time to eat, you press a button that delivers bolus insulin to cover the meal. Some pumps connect with a glucose monitor system so you can monitor your blood sugar over time and make adjustments as needed. ▶

What about jet injectors?

They've been around for about 20 years, but these needle-free devices, which use high pressure to spray a fine stream of insulin into the skin, have yet to gain popularity. The reason? It can be challenging to administer the correct amount of insulin, plus the "injection" itself can cause bruising and discomfort. What's more, it's costly and requires proper maintenance—not sterilizing the injector regularly opens you up to infection.

A pump may be right for you if ...

- ☐ You have an unpredictable schedule
- ☐ You inject insulin four or five times a day
- ☐ You want to avoid blood sugar swings


Make sure to: Learn how to use the pump properly and feel comfortable with the technology and maintenance involved, monitor your blood sugar and match the insulin dose to your meals.

Want mealtime insulin without the stick? Ask about inhaled

If you're tired of injecting insulin every time you eat a meal—and never know when you'll be eating next—inhaled insulin might be a good choice. It's delivered through an inhaler-like device loaded with a cartridge filled with rapid-acting insulin and starts to work in about 15 minutes.

An inhaled insulin may be right for you if ...

- ☐ You want to avoid needle sticks
- ☐ You want a fast and easy method
- ☐ You like spontaneity

Make sure to: Ask your insurance company about coverage or ask about manufacturer savings programs, take inhaled insulin in combination with long-acting insulin, be aware that inhaled insulin leaves your system quickly. 

Meet your healthcare team!

A multidisciplinary approach that's tailored to your needs will give you an edge on your diabetes management plan. These are the people who can help:

- **Endocrinologist:** An MD/DO trained in treating diabetes and other diseases of the endocrine system.
- **Primary care physician:** Family doctor or internist who may have diagnosed your diabetes. Your PCP can treat diabetes and also coordinate care.
- **Diabetes educator:** Certified health-care professional trained in all aspects of diabetes care, from designing meal plans and checking blood sugar to managing meds and more.
- **Registered dietitian:** A professional who can teach you how to read food labels, plan meals and balance food with medication.
- **Neurologist:** An MD who can treat nerve damage (neuropathy) caused by diabetes.
- **Ophthalmologist/optometrist:** Eye specialists who can monitor for diabetic eye disease, such as retinopathy and glaucoma.
- **Dentist:** A healthcare professional who can help you maintain healthy teeth and gums.
- **Podiatrist:** Foot doctor who can help you treat diabetes-related foot problems and help avoid foot injuries.