

# Patient information about self administration of insulin on wards

This leaflet aims to answer your questions about giving your own insulin while in hospital. It explains the benefits, risks and alternatives, as well as what you can expect when you come to hospital.

If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor, nurse or pharmacist caring for you.

## What is self-administration?

Usually when you come into hospital a nurse will give your medicines to you. If you have diabetes, this may include the nurse injecting doses of your usual insulin. We recognise, however, that you may prefer to give your insulin doses to yourself.

## Can everyone who uses insulin self-administer?

Your nurse will need to assess that it is safe and in your best interests to administer your own insulin doses. If you are very unwell or other changes have been made to your treatments that can affect your glucose, it may not be possible for you to self-administer insulin at this time. In this case, a nurse will give your doses for you.

During the assessment, the nurse will need to ask you some questions. The questions will assess your understanding of insulin, including your doses and injection timings. They will also check your injection technique.

If the nurse feels it is safe for you to self administer insulin, you will be asked to sign a form that says you agree to do so. You should read this leaflet and ask any questions that you have before signing.

## What are the benefits of injecting insulin myself?

We recognise that people with diabetes are usually very knowledgeable about their condition and its treatment. Often, you know better than anybody how your glucose level responds to different situations and different insulin doses.

Letting patients with diabetes inject their own insulin in hospitals has been shown to improve the timing of doses and therefore give better glucose control.

## What are the risks?

Insulin can be dangerous if a wrong dose is given. This is why we need to ensure that you are well enough to give your doses. Sometimes being unwell can affect your decision making and the nurse will assess that this is not the case before letting you self-administer.

Also, other medicines, such as steroids, can affect your blood sugar level, and if we need to give you these, it may not be safe for you to administer your usual insulin doses.

For the safety of other patients on the ward, insulin must be stored in a locked medicines cupboard. In addition, any used needles must be immediately disposed of in a yellow sharps bin.

## **Are there any alternatives?**

You do not have to administer your own insulin. If you prefer, the nurse can continue to give you your doses. Choosing not to administer your insulin will not affect the treatment you receive in any way.

## **What will I need to do?**

If you have any questions after reading this leaflet, ask your nurse. When you are happy that your questions have been answered and if you wish to give your own insulin doses, the nurse will ask you to sign a consent form.

Make sure you have enough supplies of your insulin and needles for your hospital stay. If not, alert your nurse or the ward pharmacy team. The nurse will give you a small yellow sharps bin where you should dispose of your needles immediately after use.

Your insulin will be kept in your bedside medicines locker which will be kept locked. Where possible, you should be given an individual key to access your insulin. If an individual key is not available, you should ask the nurse to open the locker shortly before your insulin dose is due. Medicines should not be left out unattended. Once you have given your dose, ask a nurse to lock it away again for you.

After dosing, let your nurse know the time you gave your insulin and the actual dose that you injected. The nurse will write this on your medicines chart.

## **What happens if I change my mind?**

Remember, it is your decision. You can change your mind at any time, even if you have signed the consent form. Let staff know immediately if you change your mind. Your wishes will be respected at all times. If you would like to read our consent policy, please tell a member of staff.

## **Can I monitor my own blood sugar?**

We will monitor your blood glucose using the ward meters. These are very precise and are not affected by other medicines you could be given during your stay. There is no need for you to monitor your glucose with your own meter. However, if you wish to do so in addition to the ward meter tests, you can. Alert a nurse if your reading is less than 4 or higher than 11 and they will confirm the result with the ward meter and treat you if necessary.

## What should I do if I have a problem?

If you notice any of the following symptoms, alert your nurse immediately as these can be signs that you have hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar):

Sweating	Tremor
Feeling uncomfortably warm	Pounding heart
Feeling anxious	Hunger
Tingling in or around the mouth	Tiredness
Confusion	Drowsiness
Dizziness	Difficulty concentrating
Difficulty speaking	

### Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about self-administering insulin while on the ward, please speak to your ward nurse or pharmacist.

### Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

**t:** 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas'    **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's    **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

### Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

**t:** 020 7188 8815    **fax:** 020 7188 5953

### NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

**t:** 111

### NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### Become a member of your local hospitals, and help shape our future

Membership is free and it is completely up to you how much you get involved. To become a member of our Foundation Trust, you need to be 18 years of age or over, live in Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Wandsworth or Westminster or have been a patient at either hospital in the last five years. To join:

**t:** 0848 143 4017    **e:** [members@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:members@gstt.nhs.uk)

**w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk)