



Use of insulin during pregnancy

A guide for starting insulin

If your blood sugar gets too high during pregnancy, insulin may be necessary to bring it back down. Hyperglycemia (too-high blood sugar) can affect the baby's wellbeing and increases the likelihood of high infant birth weight.

Two types of insulin are used to treat hyperglycemia

Long-acting insulin

- Long-acting insulin is used if fasting blood sugar levels exceed the reference value, i.e. if blood sugar level is 5.6 mmol/L or higher.
- Insulin is injected in the thigh once daily at the same time of day, usually in the evening at about 22:00.
- This is a long-acting insulin which lasts for up to 24 hours.
- Examples of long-acting insulin are Insulatard and Lantus.

Short-acting insulin

- Short-acting insulin is used if postprandial blood sugar levels (after a meal) exceed the reference value, i.e. if blood sugar level is 7.8 mmol/L or higher.
- This medicine is injected into the abdomen 15 minutes before a meal.
- Examples of short-acting insulin are Novorapid and Fiasp.

How to inject insulin

1. Four units are injected to begin with. The dosage may be increased by two units every other day until blood sugar levels fall below the ideal value. It is not necessary to disinfect the injection site.
2. Roll the pen back and forth 3-4 times before injection and set the pen to the number of units to be given.
3. Insert the nib into the skin (see figure 1) so that the needle is at a 90° angle to the skin.
4. Press all the way down on the button at the end until the display reads "0". Wait 10 seconds before removing the needle.
5. If the insulin dose exceeds 30 units, it can be divided into two doses.

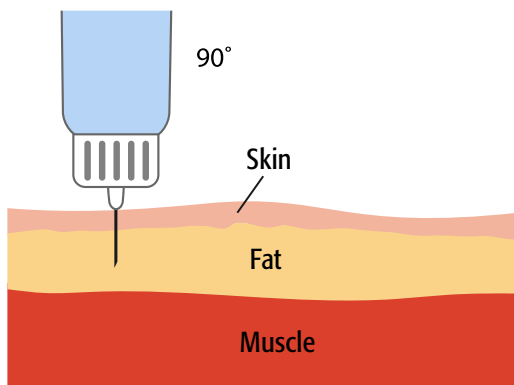


Figure 1. Insulin injected under skin.

Insulin pens

Insulin pens

- Insulin pens are sold in packs of five. Insulin can be purchased at most pharmacies, but during late-stage pregnancy it is recommended to buy an individual insulin pen sold exclusively at the Landspítali pharmacy.
- Pens in use do not need to be refrigerated. New, unused insulin pens should be kept in the refrigerator, preferably at the top of the refrigerator door.
- Freezing insulin or exposing it to sunlight damages the insulin.

Needles

Use a new needle every time you use your pen. Needles are subsidised by Icelandic Health Insurance. A doctor or midwife must submit an electronic request to apply for the subsidy, and it usually takes 1-2 days for a request to be approved.

After your baby is born

If medication was not required to reduce blood sugar levels before pregnancy, medication may be stopped once the baby is born.

Telephone numbers

Antenatal care, prenatal ultrasound and women's emergency services 543 3253

This educational material is provided for patients at Landspítali and their families, and is based on the best information available at the time of publication. The purpose of this publication is to support the professional advice of Landspítali's medical staff, who will provide further information as needed. This material is not intended to replace personal guidance from medical staff.

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