

# Diabetes: Just the Basics

## Learning About Insulin Pens

### What is an insulin pen?

An insulin pen is a device for giving insulin shots. It looks like a pen. Inside the pen is a needle and a cartridge filled with insulin. You can set the dose of insulin with a dial on the outside of the pen. You use the pen to give the insulin shot.

### Why do some people prefer pens?

- Most people find that insulin pens are easier to use than a bottle and syringe.
- Many people feel less pain (or no pain) with the smaller insulin pen needle, compared to a syringe needle.
- Insulin pens may help you give yourself more accurate doses. When you draw insulin into a syringe, you must carefully measure so that you don't get too much or too little. But with a pen, you set a dial for the amount of insulin you want, and then you push the button.
- Insulin pens may work better than syringes for people who don't see well or who have problems, like arthritis, that make it harder to use a syringe.
- Using an insulin pen draws less attention from others. You can give yourself insulin with fewer people noticing.
- You don't need to carry insulin bottles and syringes everywhere you go. An insulin pen fits into a pocket or purse.

### What are the drawbacks to pens?

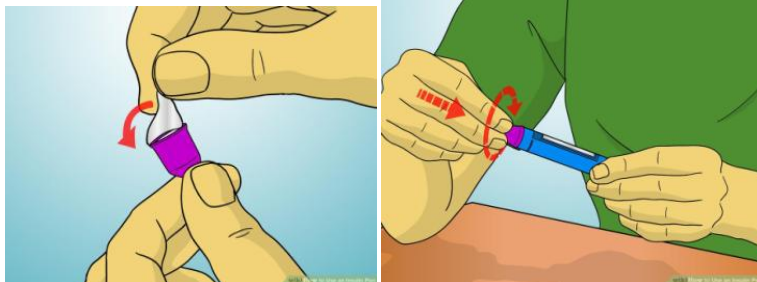
\*Insulin pens give you only a limited choice of dose amounts. You may not be able to find a pen that offers the dose of insulin you need.

\*Pen makers offer only a limited variety of insulin mixes. So if you need mixed-dose insulin, you may need to inject yourself with two separate pens to get the right amounts of each insulin.

**\* Your insurance may not cover insulin pens, which cost more than syringes. Please check with your insurance company.**

### How do you use an insulin pen?

1. Wash your hands, Remove paper on back of needle , screw on a new needle.



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2. Remove the outer cap from the needle. Keep this outer cap. You will use it later to safely



dispose of the needle.

3. **Remove the inner cover from the needle.** Be careful not to prick yourself. To keep the needle clean, set the insulin pen on a counter or put the outer cap back over the needle



while you do the next step.

4. **Prime the pen** – turn the dose to 2 units, hold the pen pointing upward, you should see a drop/ stream of insulin come from the needle.. priming the pen is a good way to know that the air is out of the pen and you will get the right insulin dose.

5. **Setting the dose** – make sure the Then dial is at zero then dial the the pen to your prescribed dose.

6. Clean the area of skin where you will give the injection. If you use alcohol to clean the skin, let it dry.

7 If you covered the needle with the outer cap, remove it now. Check to make sure that you have the right dose. Then, using the hand not holding the insulin pen, slightly pinch a fold of skin between your fingers and thumb.

8. Push the needle all the way into the pinched-up area.

9 Let go of the pinched-up area, and push the plunger of the pen all the way in. Count to five before taking the needle out.

10. Put only the outer cap back over the needle. (The thin, inner cover is harder to put back on, and you could stick yourself.)

11. After covering the needle with the outer cap, unscrew the needle and throw it away in a sharps container or other solid plastic container. You can get a sharps container at your drugstore.

Don't share insulin pens with anyone else who uses insulin. Even when the needle is changed, an insulin pen can carry bacteria or blood that can make another person sick.



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