

# INSULIN SYRINGES AND PENS

Insulin is injected in the fat just under the skin, using:

- Syringes
- Insulin pens
- Insulin pumps

The most common way to inject insulin is with a *syringe*.

- A syringe is a hollow plastic tube with a plunger inside and a short skinny needle attached.
- Insulin is injected into the fatty tissue just under the skin. This is called a subcutaneous tissue, or “sub-Q” injection.



Syringes come in different sizes.

- Each line on a 100-unit syringe marks 2 units of insulin.
- Each line on a 50-unit or 30-unit syringe marks 1 unit of insulin.
- Use a syringe large enough to hold the whole dose of insulin.

Place label here.

# Starting Insulin – a patient guide

## INSULIN SYRINGES AND PENS

- Use a 30-unit syringe if you take 30 units of insulin or less.
- Use a 50-unit syringe if you take 50 units of insulin or less.
- Use a syringe that shows 1/2-unit marks if you need 1/2 a unit of insulin.
- Be sure that you can clearly see the markings on your syringe.
- No prescription is needed for insulin syringes.
- If you have poor eyesight or arthritis in your hands, talk to your healthcare provider about using another method, such as an insulin pen.
- Your healthcare provider can show you the different sizes of syringes and help you choose what works best for you.

Needles are described by length and thickness (“gauge”).

- The standard needle is 1/2-inch long.
- Needles also come in 5/16-inch and 3/16-inch lengths.
- The 3/16-inch length is often used for children.
- The thinner the needle, the higher its gauge. For example, a 31-gauge needle is thinner than a 28-gauge needle.

**Insulin pens** look like writing pens, except that there is a thin, short needle at the end.

- Some insulin pens can be refilled, while other pens are thrown away when empty.
- Pre-filled insulin pens come with either one type of insulin or a mixture of two types of insulin.
- Insulin pens with pre-mixes work if they match your prescription.
- You may need one insulin pen for each type of insulin if pre-mix does not match your prescription.

**Insulin pumps** are used by people who have type 1 diabetes. People with type 2 diabetes rarely use an insulin pump. Insulin pumps give a continuous dose of insulin. Talk to your healthcare provider if you think an insulin pump might be right for you.