PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Giving Yourself an Insulin Injection With the FlexPen®

This information describes how to prepare and give yourself an insulin injection (shot) with the FlexPen. Your nurse will review these steps with you and help you practice them.

Storing Your FlexPen

- Keep all new, unused insulin pens in the refrigerator. **Do not freeze them.**
- Never put the pen you are using back in the refrigerator. Keep it at room temperature, away from heat and sunlight.
- Refer to the table below to know when to discard your FlexPen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Insulin Type</th>
<th>When to Discard your FlexPen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NovoLog®</td>
<td>28 days after piercing the rubber stopper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NovoLog® Mix 70/30</td>
<td>14 days after piercing the rubber stopper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levemir®</td>
<td>42 days after piercing the rubber stopper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gather Your Supplies

Clear off a clean, flat tabletop to work on and gather the following supplies:

- FlexPen
- The insulin your doctor prescribed: NovoLog (clear), NovoLog
Mix 70/30 (cloudy), or Levemir (clear)

- A new single-use pen needle
- Alcohol swabs
- A wastebasket
- A sharps container (a strong, plastic container with a tight cap). Do not store your sharps in glass bottles, soda bottles, milk jugs, aluminum cans, coffee cans, or paper or plastic bags. For more information, please read *How to Store and Dispose of Your Home Medical Sharps* ([www.mskcc.org/pe/store_dispose_sharps](http://www.mskcc.org/pe/store_dispose_sharps)).

**Prepare the Pen**

1. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

2. Pull the cover off the pen (see Figure 1).

   ![Figure 1. Pulling the cover off of the pen](cover.png)

3. Open an alcohol swab and wipe the rubber tip at the top of the pen (see Figure 1).

4. Remove the tabbed paper from the outer cap of a new single-use needle (see Figure 2).
5. Leave the needle in the case. Gently push the end of the needle into the rubber stopper. Screw the needle into the rubber stopper until it stops, just like screwing a top onto a jar (see Figure 3).

6. When the needle is secure, take off the outer needle cap and place it on the tabletop (see Figure 4).

7. Pull off the inner needle cap and throw it in the wastebasket (see Figure 5).

Giving the Injection

Follow the steps below to prime the pen, set your dose, and inject the insulin.
Prime the pen
You must prime the pen before you set your dose and inject the insulin. You will do this by giving an “air shot”. This removes the air bubbles and ensures the pen and needle are working properly.

1. Dial 2 units (to the number 2) on the dose selector dial by turning it clockwise (see Figure 6). You will hear and feel a faint click for each unit as you turn the dial. The plunger button on the pen will also rise. If you dial past 2 units, you can turn the dose selector counter-clockwise to correct it.

Figure 6. Turning the dose selector dial

2. Point the needle up. Press the plunger button against the tabletop and push out the 2 units of insulin. The dose selector dial will return to zero (0) if all the units were pushed out.

3. If necessary, repeat these steps until a drop or stream of insulin appears at the needle tip. If you are using a brand new pen, you may have to prime it up to 3 times to get a drop of insulin at the tip.

4. Shake the insulin off the needle tip.

Set your dose
Turn the dose selector clockwise to set your dose. Set it at the number of insulin units prescribed by your doctor, or as instructed on your sliding scale. If you dialed too many units, turn the dose
selector counter-clockwise to correct it.

**Inject the insulin**
You can inject the insulin into your stomach (belly) or the top of your thigh. Inject the insulin using the “5-P” method below.

1. Gently clean your skin with an alcohol swab at the site selected for injection.
2. **P**inch your skin gently at the site selected for injection.
3. **P**ierce the site with the pen.
4. **P**ush the plunger button on the pen all the way down until the plunger meets the pen.
5. **P**ause after injecting and count to 10 (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10).
6. **P**ull the needle out of the injection site.

**After the Injection**

1. Recap the needle on the pen with the needle cover that you placed on the tabletop.
2. Unscrew the covered needle from the pen and discard it in your sharps container.
3. Put the cover back on the pen.
4. Store it at room temperature, away from heat and direct sunlight.

**Discarding Your Sharps Container**
When your sharps container is more than half full, wrap the lid or cap with strong tape to create a more secure seal and prevent leakage. Keep the container separate from trash that will be
recycled.

If you live in New York City, you can place the sealed container in with your regular trash for collection. **Do not place it with your recyclables.** If you live in a different county, check with your local department of health for instructions.

You can also bring the sealed container to:

- Your nurse at your next clinic visit.
- Any nonfederal hospital in New York State.
- A local pharmacy.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.