

IS THE INSULIN PEN RIGHT FOR ME?



WHAT IS AN INSULIN PEN?

When people have type 1 diabetes they need to take insulin. There are a few ways to get insulin into the body:

- With a vial and syringe
 - With an insulin pen
 - With an insulin pump
 - Inhaled insulin that goes into your body through your lungs
- Insulin pens cost more than vials and syringes. But people often find them simpler to use. This is

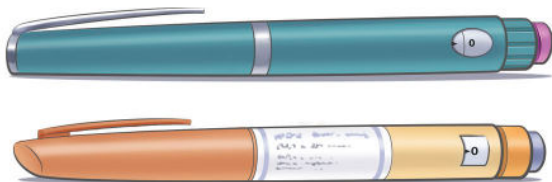
because they are filled with insulin. So, you do not have to deal with a syringe and a vial to draw up the insulin. This can make it easier to give a shot when you are at work or out with family or friends. You can keep the pen in a pocket or purse at room temperature. An insulin pen injects insulin into the body. There are different types of pens. They look a lot like a large writing pen.



I like the pen because no one notices it. It does not have to be refrigerated and is easy to carry.

ABOUT INSULIN PENS

A basic insulin pen looks like this:



The pen uses a short needle. You have to attach a new needle onto the pen with each shot. Then you will remove the needle after you have used it. Your doctor has to write a prescription for the pen needles as well as the insulin pen. If you are using a reusable pen, your doctor also will write a prescription for the pen cartridges.

Pens are not new. People around the world have used them for many years. Some of the newer insulins only come in pens.

Are all insulin pens the same?

The short answer is - no. Insulin pen brands and models are not all the same. You will need to work with your diabetes team to choose a pen that is right for you. Your insurance company will let you know which pens they cover, as well.

What things should I think about when I choose a pen?

Here are things to think about when you choose a pen:

- How easy or hard would it be for me to use the pen?
- How many units of insulin does the pen hold when it is full?
- What is the largest size dose that I could inject with the pen?
- Does the pen dose in 1/2 units?



MORE ABOUT INSULIN PENS

Why do more people prefer the pen to shots?

Many people prefer the pen because:

- It is simpler to use than shots.
- It is easier to give exact doses.
- It is easy to carry.
- It gives you more insulin choices since some types of insulin only come in pens.
- It can be less obvious in public since you do not have to draw insulin with a syringe from a vial.



Are there drawbacks to using the pen versus shots?

There are a couple of reasons you may not want to use a pen:

- They cost more than shots.
- You cannot mix different kinds of insulin together on your own. But some pens come with insulins already mixed in them.



TYPES OF INSULIN PENS

Insulin pens come in two types:

1. Disposable pens that come filled with insulin. You throw the pen away when it is empty or expired.
2. Reusable pens where you replace the cartridge of insulin. You replace the cartridge when the insulin is used up or expired. Some reusable pens are "Smart." They connect to a phone app.



Pros and cons of disposable pens

Pros:

- They have a large magnifying window that shows the number of units.
- They make a clicking sound. This helps people who cannot see very well because they can hear the number of units when dialing a dose.
- You do not have to change insulin cartridges like on reusable pens.
- Once the pen is empty you just throw it away in a sharps container.

Cons:

- Over time they are more expensive than reusable pens.
- It makes more waste than reusable pens.

Pros and cons of reusable pens

Pros:

- No need to change pens. There is a small insulin cartridge that you put into the pen's chamber. If you need to change your insulin you just insert the new insulin cartridge.
- Small cartridges mean you may waste less insulin due to expiration.
- They are often cheaper than disposable pens.

Cons:

- Even though they are often cheaper than disposable pens, they still cost more than shots.
- These pens are sturdy and can last for several years. But if they get damaged they must be replaced.
- The insulin type you use may not come in a reusable pen.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PEN SAFETY AND CARE?

- Insulin pens are for just one person to use. Never share a pen, even if you change the needle. Blood can get into the insulin cartridge after a shot. This can expose others to infection if you share the pen.
- Once you start using a pen you can keep it in your pocket or purse at room temperature for about a month. Check your insulin package insert to find out how long that insulin can stay at room temperature. The amount of time can vary based on the insulin type.
- Store the insulin pen cartridges or disposable pens you are not using in the fridge.
- Do not let the insulin get hot or be exposed to direct sunlight. Do not freeze the insulin either.
- When you travel by plane, take insulin onboard with you. Do not put insulin into luggage that will be stored away from you.
- Carrying a doctor's note or the box that has the prescription information on it may be helpful when you go through airport security.



I think the pen is easy to use. I can take it anywhere and don't need to refrigerate it.



WILL MY INSURANCE COVER THE INSULIN PEN?

Some insurance plans cover the cost of the pen and some do not. There are many ways to find out if your healthcare plan will pay for a pen:

- Ask someone from your diabetes team.
- Ask your pharmacy to check for you. Your pharmacy can also tell you how much you will have to pay for a pen. Sometimes you may have to pay a "co-pay". A co-pay is a part of the cost that your insurance plan does not cover.
- Call your health plan to see if the pen is covered.

Even if a pen is not covered by your healthcare plan, your diabetes team may still be able to help. They can write a letter to your healthcare plan telling them why you need an insulin pen. This can convince your health plan to pay for your pen.

Also, many health plans have a brand of insulin they prefer. This means one brand of insulin may cost you much less than another. Your diabetes team will know

if you can only use a certain brand of insulin. But in most cases the different brands of the same type of insulin work the same way. For instance, there are three brands of rapid acting insulin: aspart (Novolog), lispro (Humalog or Admelog) and glulisine (Apidra). All work in the same way. So, if you have not had a bad reaction to one of them, you can usually switch from one to the other without a problem.

What would a pen cost if I had to pay for it myself?

Disposable pens can cost between \$490 and \$570 for a box of 5. Reusable pens can cost between \$450 and \$550 for a box of 5. Check internet sites like "Good RX" to find the cheapest place to buy pens. Sometimes discount cards are available. The insulin companies also have programs to help you afford pens.