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## Top 10 Things to Know about **Insulin for Type 2 Diabetes**

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Insulin is life—without it, the body can't convert the food we eat into the energy that's needed to survive. Type 1 diabetes targets for destruction the cells that make insulin, and so the disease absolutely requires that insulin be taken as a medication. The relationship between insulin and type 2 diabetes is more complicated. People with type 2 can make some of their own insulin, but it's not enough to maintain blood glucose levels.

Type 2 diabetes can be treated with medication in several ways and without question, insulin is the right option for certain people with type 2 diabetes. Are you one of them?

**Here are ten things you should know about insulin:**



### **1. Starting insulin does not mean you failed at caring for your diabetes**

Some people see insulin use, or the need to start insulin, as a failure. It's not. Type 2 diabetes is a progressive illness, which means that over time the body makes less and less insulin. Even people without diabetes produce less insulin as they age.

### **2. Insulin does not cause diabetes complications**

Insulin helps bring blood glucose to target, which can prevent complications, not cause them. The perception that insulin is related to diabetes complications may exist because insulin users have usually had diabetes longer on average than those who take other medications. Having diabetes for a long time, even when it is managed, makes some types of complications more likely. Plus, doctors may tend to prescribe insulin for people who are having trouble managing their blood glucose and high blood glucose levels also raises the risk for diabetes complications.

### **3. Insulin is not only for people who've had diabetes a long time**

Sometimes insulin is the right choice for a person newly diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, particularly if blood glucose levels are very high at diagnosis. After blood glucose levels are better managed, it may be possible to reduce or stop insulin and use another type of diabetes medication.

### **4. Oral medications are not necessarily safer**

It's true that too much insulin can cause blood sugar to go too low (hypoglycemia), but it is otherwise safe and has no adverse effects on the heart, kidneys, pancreas, or liver.

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### 5. Injections don't need to hurt

Insulin has to make its way under the skin to work, and for that you need a needle. Some people may experience discomfort when injecting insulin. However, today's insulin needles are short and very thin—making injections less painful than they once were. If concerns about pain are keeping you from trying insulin, talk to your doctor about testing a needle during a visit or if inhalable insulin is right for you. You may be pleasantly surprised.

### 6. Insulin doesn't necessarily lead to weight gain

Insulin helps the body absorb the calories from the foods you eat, so weight gain is a risk. When starting insulin, you can take steps to avoid gaining weight. Talk to your diabetes care team about steps you can take.

### 7. Insulin can cause hypoglycemia

The occasional low may be hard to avoid when taking insulin, but people with type 2 diabetes who take only long-acting insulin are less likely to have hypoglycemia than those taking multiple daily shots of mealtime insulin. It may be scary, but the unpleasant symptoms of low blood sugar are your body telling you that your blood glucose is too low and you need to eat something. Before you start a new exercise routine or change your eating plan or if you experience lows, talk to your doctor about a dose adjustment.

### 8. Taking insulin may be easier than you think

You may associate insulin with carbohydrate counting, and other tasks. Some insulin users do benefit from these activities, but not everyone will need to do the extra work. For example, most people with type 2 diabetes who take insulin use a fixed dose of long-acting insulin, so they may not need to count carbs, which is a strategy for adjusting mealtime insulin doses.

### 9. Syringes are not the only way to deliver insulin

There are other insulin delivery options available, such as pens and pumps. Many people who've been drawing up insulin with vials and syringes for years find freedom in insulin pens. They're more portable, user friendly, discreet, easier to read, and use pen needles as tiny as 4 mm long. That said, depending on insurance, they can cost more than vials of insulin. There are also insulin pumps available. Talk to your diabetes team about what's right for you.

### 10. Starting to use insulin doesn't mean you'll need to use it forever

Insulin has gotten a reputation for being an “end of the line” medication for type 2 that once started, can't be stopped. Once glucose levels are controlled and lifestyle changes are in place, people may want or need to include other medications that could change how much they use or the need to keep using insulin.