



PURCHASING AN INSULIN PEN

By Kimberly Goad

Using an insulin pen can take the hassle out of injecting. Here's what you should keep in mind.

Find the Best Pen for You

- For kids and very insulin-sensitive adults: Look for a pen that allows for 0.5-unit insulin doses. Most pens dose in 1-unit increments.
- For those with dexterity issues: Consider the placement of a pen's dosing button—some may make dosing easier than others.
- For the ouch averse: Some pens use spring-loaded mechanisms that make injecting less painful, says Kellie Antinori-Lent, MSN, RN, ACNS-BC, BC-ADM, CDE, a diabetes clinical nurse specialist at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center-Shadyside Hospital.

Pen Needles: What to Know

Needles vary in length and thickness. Needle length can range from 4 to 12.7 millimeters, though most are 4 or 5 millimeters long. The thickness of the needle is measured by gauge (most are between 29 and 33). The lower the gauge, the thicker the needle. Shorter, thinner needles may feel more comfortable, but thicker needles make it possible to deliver a larger dose of insulin more quickly. If you find insulin leaks out after an injection, a longer needle may be best for you—it will inject deeper into the tissue and reduce leakage. Technique can also affect what you feel upon injection, says Antinori-Lent.



Safety Note

Never share insulin pens with someone else.

Even if you replace the needle, you risk spreading harmful bacteria and viruses. Likewise, never share insulin pen needles.



ELI LILLY BASAGLAR KWIKPEN

Disposable
INSULIN
Basaglar
DOSE DELIVERY
1-unit increments, up to 80 units at a time
TOTAL CAPACITY
300 units
DETAILS
Pen is light gray, with a green ring on the end of the dose knob and green bars on the label.



ELI LILLY HUMALOG KWIKPEN

Disposable
INSULINS
Humalog U-100
Humalog U-200
Humalog Mix 50/50
Humalog Mix 75/25
DOSE DELIVERY
1-unit increments, up to 60 units at a time
TOTAL CAPACITY
For all except U-200: 300 units. For U-200: 600 units.
DETAILS
Pen is blue, with different colored labels for various types of insulin.



ELI LILLY HUMAPEN LUXURA HD

Reusable
INSULIN
Humalog U-100
DOSE DELIVERY
0.5-unit increments, up to 30 units at a time
TOTAL CAPACITY
300 units
DETAILS
Can dispense half units of insulin. Pen is green and made of metal.



ELI LILLY HUMULIN KWIKPEN

Disposable
INSULINS
Humulin N
Humulin 70/30
Humulin R U-500
DOSE DELIVERY
For all except U-500: 1-unit increments, up to 60 units at a time. U-500: 5-unit increments, up to 300 units at a time.
TOTAL CAPACITY
For all except U-500: 300 units. For U-500: 1,500 units.
DETAILS
Humulin N and Humulin 70/30 pens are beige, with different colored labels and dosing knobs for various types of insulin. The U-500 pen is aqua.



NOVO NORDISK LEVEMIR FLEXTOUCH

Disposable
INSULIN
Levemir
DOSE DELIVERY
1-unit increments, up to 80 units at a time
TOTAL CAPACITY
300 units
DETAILS
Pen comes in navy with aqua/light green label. Spring-loaded mechanism requires less force for dose delivery. There is an audible click at the end of the dose, but the full dose has not been delivered until the dose counter returns to zero.



NOVO NORDISK NOVOPEN ECHO

Reusable
INSULIN
NovoLog PenFill Cartridges
DOSE DELIVERY
0.5-unit increments, up to 30 units at a time
TOTAL CAPACITY
300 units
DETAILS
Pen is red with optional decorative skins. Memory function shows units of last dose and hours since last injection.



HOW TO INJECT:

- Prepare the skin. Clean the area with alcohol, if possible, then wait for it to dry.
- Prime the pen. To ensure accurate dosing, place a new needle onto the pen and hold the pen with the needle pointing up. Dial 2 units, then push the button until the dose indicator hits zero. Repeat (if necessary) until you see insulin at the needle tip. If no insulin appears, replace the needle and repeat.
- Check the pen for air bubbles (air displaces the insulin, which could cause a dosing error). Hold the pen with the needle pointing upward and gently tap the cartridge a few times.
- Inject at a 90-degree angle. If you're using a longer needle, consider a gentle two-finger pinch to the skin to avoid injecting into the muscle. Push the dose button; make sure the counter returns to zero.

Hold for five to 10 seconds, then withdraw the needle from the skin. Remove the needle from the pen and cover the pen.

■ The abdomen is the preferred injection site—as long as you are 2 inches away from the navel—because it's easy to see and reach. The outer thighs, back of the upper arms, and upper buttocks are also good options. Site rotation is crucial. For guidance, go to diabetesforecast.org/siteotation.

■ Change the needle before each injection. With use, needles become dull, causing pain. To prevent air from getting into the pen reservoir and to maintain sterility, avoid leaving a needle on your pen after use.

If you have a particular needle you prefer, be sure to ask your physician to specify it

on your prescription, which should also say “brand necessary” and “do not substitute,” says Antinori-Lent. (Keep in mind: That may cost more.) A standardized pen needle should fit all pen devices. To be certain, check with your pharmacist, health care provider, or diabetes educator before you purchase needles.

Safety Note

Whichever needle you go with, do not wipe it with an alcohol pad before using.

“All needles are lubricated with a coating to allow needles to glide in during injecting,” says Antinori-Lent. That quick once-over with an alcohol wipe removes the coating.

NOVO NORDISK

NOVOLOG FLEXPEN

Disposable **INSULINS**

NovoLog
NovoLog Mix 70/30

DOSE DELIVERY

1-unit increments, up to 60 units at a time

TOTAL CAPACITY

300 units

DETAILS

Pen is blue, with different colored labels, cartridge holders, and dosing knobs for various types of insulin. Dial returns to zero after injection to indicate delivery.



NOVO NORDISK

TRESIBA FLEXTOUCH

Disposable **INSULINS**

Tresiba U-100
Tresiba U-200

DOSE DELIVERY

For U-100: 1-unit increments, up to 80 units at a time.

For U-200: 2-unit increments, up to 160 units at a time.

TOTAL CAPACITY

For U-100: 300 units.

For U-200: 600 units.

DETAILS

Pen comes in different colors for various types of insulin. An internal spring-loaded mechanism requires less force to deliver a dose. There is an audible click at the end of a dose, but the full dose has not been delivered until the dose counter returns to zero.



OWEN MUMFORD

AUTOPEN CLASSIC

Reusable **INSULIN**

Humalog

DOSE DELIVERY

One version delivers in 1-unit increments, up to 21 units at a time.

Another version delivers in 2-unit increments, up to 42 units at a time.

TOTAL CAPACITY

300 units

DETAILS

Pen is blue. Dosing button is located on the side of the pen for easier injecting and handling. Spring-loaded mechanism requires less force for dose delivery. Dose selector has audible clicks to ensure proper dosage.



SANOFI APIDRA SOLOSTAR

Disposable **INSULIN**

Apidra
DOSE DELIVERY

1-unit increments, up to 80 units at a time

TOTAL CAPACITY

300 units

DETAILS

Pen is blue.



SANOFI LANTUS SOLOSTAR

Disposable **INSULIN**

Lantus

DOSE DELIVERY

1-unit increments, up to 80 units at a time

TOTAL CAPACITY

300 units

DETAILS

Pen is gray.



SANOFI TOUJEO SOLOSTAR

Disposable **INSULIN**

Toujeo

DOSE DELIVERY

1-unit increments, up to 80 units at a time

TOTAL CAPACITY

450 units

DETAILS

Pen is off-white with a green label.

