

Insulin Pump Therapy (1 of 2)

Insulin pump therapy* can help some groups of people with type 1 diabetes maintain ideal blood glucose levels more consistently than on regular insulin injections. Clinical experience and National guidance helps identify which individuals with diabetes may benefit from consideration of an insulin pump.

What is insulin pump therapy?

Insulin pump therapy is a way of continuously delivering insulin into the body at a controlled but variable rate – for example, more insulin can be delivered when needed at meal times. The pump is a small mechanical device that is worn outside the body, often on a belt or in a pocket. It pumps insulin into the body through a narrow cannula (small, thin tube) or a very thin needle inserted under the skin.

Insulin pump therapy may help people with diabetes to have more control over their condition and have a more flexible lifestyle and less worry about having a hypoglycaemic episode.

However, people using an insulin pump have to be careful to avoid infection at the injection site. They also have to take several blood tests every day and estimate their intake of carbohydrates and calories so that they can program the pump to deliver the right amount of insulin. In addition, they have to move the needle or cannula to a new site every 2 or 3 days.

Who should receive insulin pump therapy?

Guidance from the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) recommends insulin pump therapy as one option for people with type 1 diabetes provided that:

- Multiple-dose insulin therapy (including using insulin glargine when it's appropriate) has failed; AND
- They have demonstrated a sufficient degree of commitment and diabetes self-care that would enable them to use the pump effectively.

Multiple-dose insulin therapy has failed when someone has been carefully trying to manage their diabetes but hasn't been able to keep their blood glucose levels within recommended levels without having

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repeated and unpredictable hypoglycaemic episodes.

These recommendations about insulin pump therapy for type 1 diabetes are also valid for children, adolescents, pregnant women and women who are intending to become pregnant. All such individuals need to be assessed and managed by the specialist diabetes team.

Insulin pump therapy is not recommended for people who have type 2 diabetes and need to take insulin.

How do I obtain Insulin Pump Therapy?

The first step is to discuss with your GP or specialist diabetes team whether insulin pump therapy is appropriate for you. Insulin pump therapy should only be started by a trained specialist team. People starting on insulin pump therapy should be taught how to use the pump and should receive support, especially when first starting the treatment.

People who have been using insulin pump therapy for some time should have their treatment reviewed by a specialist diabetes team.

The diabetes consultant will request funding from the PCT if an individual is suitable for insulin pump therapy in accordance with NICE policy.

* Insulin pump therapy is also known as continuous subcutaneous insulin infusion (CSII).

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