



Guidelines for Insulin Storage and Handling

Patient Factsheet

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Storage

- Vials and cartridges of insulin not currently being used should be stored in the refrigerator (2 to 8 degrees) until their date of expiry away from freezing coils or freezer.
- Vials and cartridges which are in current use should be kept at room temperature and discarded after 4 weeks of opening. Cold insulin may sting and the action could be delayed
- Never use insulin which is out of date. Always check expiry date on the insulin vial or cartridge
- Avoid extremes of cold or heat. Temperatures can alter the effectiveness of the insulin
- Do not keep insulin vials or cartridges in the glove box of a car.
- Do not freeze your insulin or expose it to strong light or heat.

Handling

- Prior to use, cloudy insulin must be mixed well.
- If using a vial, gently roll the vial between the palms of the hands and /or moving the insulin up and down 20 times.
- If you draw up more than the required amount of insulin do not squirt excess insulin back into the vial as this may contaminate the vial.
- If using a pen invert the pen 20 times to mix the insulin well.



Do Not Use Vial or Cartridge

- If the expiry date on the vial or cartridge or prefilled pen has been reached.
- If the clear soluble insulin has turned cloudy (it must look clear)
- If the insulin is discoloured.
- If the insulin has been frozen or exposed to high temperatures.
- If the insulin contains lumps or flakes or sticks to the glass.

Travelling

- When travelling keep your insulin vials/cartridges in their cartons in as cool a place as possible. Keep these supplies in your hand luggage.
- Storage of insulin in an insulated container is advisable to protect the insulin from extremes of temperature.
- If travelling away from home or overseas for short periods try and take at least twice your calculated insulin requirements carried in your hand luggage.
- If travelling with a companion it is recommended to divide your insulin supplies in your hand luggage in case of lost or stolen hand luggage
- Always take a spare pen in case of damage or lost
- Always take a spare meter and extra strips supplies
- Take a Doctor's travel letter and a copy for customs
- Always be prepared and have a supply of hypo food with you
- If insulin adjustment is required contact your Diabetes Centre or GP for advice.

Adapted with acknowledgment to Hunter New England PHN