

Insulin & Other Injectables

Insulin Storage and Syringe Safety

Although manufacturers recommend storing your insulin in the refrigerator, injecting cold insulin can sometimes make the injection more painful. To avoid this, many providers suggest storing the bottle of insulin you are using at room temperature. Insulin kept at room temperature will last approximately one month.

Remember though, if you buy more than one bottle at a time to save money, store the extra bottles in the refrigerator. Then, take out the bottle ahead of time so it is ready for your next injection.

Here are some other tips for storing insulin:

- Do not store your insulin near extreme heat or extreme cold.
- Never store insulin in the freezer,

direct sunlight, or in the glove compartment of a car.

- Check the expiration date before using, and don't use any insulin beyond its expiration date.
- Examine the bottle closely to make sure the insulin looks normal before you draw the insulin into the syringe.

If you use regular, check for particles or discoloration of the insulin. If you use NPH or lente, check for "frosting" or crystals in the insulin on the inside of the bottle or for small particles or clumps in the insulin. If you find any of these in your insulin, do not use it, and return the unopened bottle to the pharmacy for an exchange and/or refund.

Syringe reuse

Reusing syringes may help you cut costs, avoid buying large supplies of syringes, and reduce waste. However, talk with your doctor or nurse before you begin reusing. They can help you decide whether it would be a safe choice for you. If you are ill, have open wounds on your hands, or have poor resistance to infection, you should not risk insulin syringe reuse. Syringe makers will not guarantee the sterility of syringes that are reused.

Here are some tips to keep in mind

when reusing syringes:

- Keep the needle clean by keeping it capped when you're not using it.
- Never let the needle touch anything but clean skin and the top of the insulin bottle.
- Never let anyone use a syringe you've already used, and don't use anyone else's syringe.
- Cleaning it with alcohol removes the coating that helps the needle slide into the skin easily.

Syringe disposal

It's time to dispose of an insulin syringe when the needle is dull or bent or has come in contact with anything other than clean skin.

If you can do it safely, clip the needles off the syringes so no one can use them. It's best to buy a device that clips, catches, and contains the needle. Do not use scissors to clip off needles—the flying needle could hurt someone or become lost.

If you don't destroy your needles, recap them. Place the needle or entire syringe in an opaque (not clear) heavy-duty plastic bottle with a screw cap or a plastic or metal box that

closes firmly. Do not use a container that will allow the needle to break through, and do not recycle your syringe container.

Your area may have rules for getting rid of medical waste such as used syringes. Ask your refuse company or city or county waste authority what method meets their rules. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has more information about [safe needle disposal in your area](#).

When traveling, bring your used syringes home. Pack them in a heavy-duty holder, such as a hard plastic pencil box, for transport.

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