

INSULIN ADJUSTMENTS: WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A DIETITIAN

FOR PEOPLE
WITH DIABETES
AND THEIR
CAREGIVERS



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For people with diabetes and their caregivers

Are you living with diabetes? Are you a caregiver for someone who is living with diabetes?

People with diabetes and their caregivers often work with dietitians. If you are taking insulin, a dietitian can help to ensure that insulin is managed as best as possible.

This document provides information on what to expect from a dietitian when it's time to manage your insulin. This is called "insulin adjustment."

What are insulin adjustments?

Insulin adjustments are changes made to the dosage, timing, or type of insulin in response to food and drink, changes in physical activity and other health factors. Knowing how to adjust insulin doses will help you maintain blood sugar within a specific range.

People with diabetes who need insulin to manage their blood sugar are prescribed insulin by their doctor. The law permits only specific individuals to perform certain acts that are considered high-risk, such as prescribing a drug or changing a prescribed drug's dosage. These are called controlled acts.

What does a dietitian do to help people taking insulin?

Dietitians may teach people with diabetes and their caregivers how to adjust insulin. Dietitians assess the carbohydrate (sugars, starches, and fibre) content of food and drinks. Working with a dietitian will help you meet blood sugar goals.

What to expect from a dietitian at your appointment

During your appointment, a dietitian will ensure they have the knowledge, skill and judgment to provide education on insulin adjustments safely and effectively. A dietitian may also:

- Address any questions or concerns you may have, within their field of expertise.
- Ask questions about your food and nutrition, physical activity, lifestyle, health history and medications.
- Determine if managing insulin is something you are comfortable with and have the support to do.
- Discuss their assessment results, recommendations, and next steps with you.
- Provide information and support to help you decide how best to approach any identified issues.
- Explain if they are working with a doctor under a delegation, so you understand all the steps.



DID YOU KNOW?

Dietitians are regulated health professionals who are highly trained experts in food and nutrition. The [College of Dietitians of Ontario \(CDO\)](#) is their regulatory body. CDO works to protect the public.

ARE YOU A DIETITIAN?

CDO has a [Position Statement and Practice Guidelines](#) to help dietitians offer safe care to clients who require insulin adjustments.

DELEGATION & CONTROLLED ACTS

Dietitians are not allowed to prescribe or change insulin unless they have the authority to do so. Dietitians receive the authority from a doctor, to change the dose, timing, or type of insulin. This is called a “delegation.” In some circumstances, delegations can result in more timely and effective healthcare. A dietitian needs a delegation to perform controlled acts.

Can dietitians tell people to increase or decrease their insulin dose?

Dietitians can provide general education where people are mainly responsible for adjusting their own insulin doses, whether it be by injection or using an insulin pump. This might include:

- education on diabetes;
- the causes of diabetes;
- how eating, exercising, and giving insulin affect the blood sugar;
- the risks of not managing blood sugar; and
- when insulin doses should be adjusted.

However, telling a person to increase or decrease their insulin dose by a specific number of units (e.g., “I recommend you increase your insulin two units to get to a blood sugar of 5-7 mmol/L.”) would be considered prescribing.

Can a dietitian inject me with my insulin?

No, dietitians cannot administer (e.g., inject) insulin in any setting unless they have a delegation – in other

WHO CAN I CONTACT WITH MY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?



words, by receiving the authority from a physician. A dietitian may also assist a person with their routine activities of living (e.g., assisting a client with administering an injection).

Can a dietitian provide an insulin sample to me?






Dispensing drugs, including insulin, is a controlled act in Ontario. Dietitians are not authorized to provide insulin samples unless they have a delegation to do so.

CONTROLLED ACTS

The law permits only specific individuals to perform higher risk acts, such as prescribing a drug or changing a drug's dosage. These are called *controlled acts*.

DELEGATION

An authorized health care provider (e.g., a doctor) can give another person the authority to perform a controlled act, such as prescribing or changing insulin or communicating a diagnosis. This is called a *delegation*.

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