

Insulin Drips

This handout explains why you need an insulin infusion, also known as an insulin drip. Answers to some common questions are listed below. If you have more questions or concerns, please ask your team.

What is insulin?

Insulin is a hormone that is made by the pancreas. It allows your body to use the sugar in food as a source of energy. It keeps blood sugar levels normal.

Why do I need insulin now?

There could be many reasons. Stress alone can increase your blood sugars. If you just had surgery, your body is under stress. Some people notice their blood sugars go up when they are worried or anxious. If you need medicines such as steroids, your blood sugars might increase as well. Changes in your diet or activity levels can raise your blood sugars too.

What is an insulin drip?

An insulin drip is given through an intravenous line (IV) rather than by injection. Insulin given through an IV gets into your body more quickly to bring down high blood sugars.

Why do blood sugar levels matter?

Keeping blood glucose levels as normal as possible will help with healing. Also, there is less chance for problems like infection and organ rejection (if you have had a transplant). You might feel better and have more energy when blood sugar levels are in a normal range.

What blood sugar levels are expected?

When not using IV insulin, blood sugar levels of 70 – 99 mg/dL are expected for someone without diabetes who has not eating anything for 8-12 hours. We expect blood sugars to be less than 140 mg/dL after meals. When using IV insulin, we are aiming for blood sugars between 110-150 mg/dL. Blood sugars levels may be much higher than this when you start on IV insulin.

How often will my blood sugars be checked?

Your blood sugars need to be checked every hour at first. If the blood sugar levels are stable, you will be checked every 1-2 hours. Blood sugar levels can change quickly. This is why we check so often.

When will the insulin drip be stopped?

The IV will be stopped when you and your blood sugars are more stable.

Will I need insulin at home?

You may or may not need insulin at home. We will decide this with you as you get closer to going home.