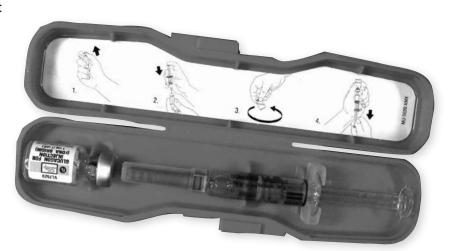


Diabetes Medications: Glucagon

Glucagon is emergency medication used to treat severe hypoglycemia (very low blood glucose). This handout explains why, when, and how to use this important medication.

Glucagon is packaged in kits.
Two common brand name kits
are the Glucagon Emergency Kit
and the GlucaGen HypoKit.



If you use insulin...

- ALWAYS have a glucagon kit on hand. A kit contains the glucagon medicine (a powder and a liquid, to be mixed together when needed), a syringe to inject it with, and instructions. You might want to leave kits in several places home, work, school, etc. Store kits at room temperature. (Don't leave a kit in a hot car, for example.)
- **Keep it current**. Check the date on each kit, and replace it when necessary. Don't use glucagon that's past its expiration date.
- Share this handout with the people who live, work, and study with you. Review WHY, WHEN, and HOW to use glucagon. Help them practice mixing and injecting glucagon according to the instructions.

If you live, work, or study with someone who uses insulin...

- Know where the glucagon kit is stored.
 A kit contains the glucagon medicine (a powder and a liquid, to be mixed together when needed), a syringe to inject it with, and instructions.
- Read the back of this handout to learn WHY, WHEN, and HOW to use glucagon.
- Practice mixing and injecting glucagon following the instructions in the kit.
 (Use an orange for the shots.)
- Be prepared to give a glucagon shot, even if you're not comfortable doing so. You could save a life!

WHY is glucagon important?

People who take insulin are at risk for episodes of severe hypoglycemia (low blood glucose). During such an episode, brain cells don't get the fuel (glucose) they need. Unless blood glucose is quickly raised, it can cause brain damage or even death.

Glucagon is one way to quickly raise blood glucose. It's a natural hormone that helps the liver release glucose into the blood stream. It's the fastest and safest way to raise blood glucose when a person is unconscious.

WHEN should glucagon be used?

A person using insulin needs an injection (shot) of glucagon if blood glucose has dropped so low that the person is:

- Unconsciousness or unresponsive
- Angry or aggressive, refusing to eat or drink quick-acting sugar source
- Having seizures or convulsions
- Unable to drink or swallow
- Unable to eat sugar or sugar-sweetened products

Ideally, the sick person's blood glucose is tested first, to make sure the symptoms are due to hypoglycemia. But since severe hypoglycemia is an emergency — and since the person helping may not know how to test blood — this isn't crucial. When in doubt, use glucagon!

Glucagon is safe, even if it's given inappropriately.

About your glucagon kit...

Glucagon is packaged in kits, in two brands: the Glucagon Emergency Kit and the Glucagen HypoKit. These kits both include instructions and unmixed glucagon medication. Here are some storage tips:

- Consider having more than one kit. That way, you can keep one at home, one at school, one for grandma's house, and so on. If you're camping or traveling, take a kit with you.
- **Keep the kit at room temperature,** out of direct sunlight and away from moisture.
- Note the expiration date on the kit and ask for a refill before the kit expires. Don't mix or use after the expiration date printed on the kit or the vial.
- Once you have your new (refill) glucagon kit, use the expired kit to practice mixing and drawing up glucagon. It's a good idea for family members and caretakers to practice this skill so they'll be ready in an emergency. Practice by injecting an orange. (Throw the orange away afterward, of course.)

HOW to give a glucagon shot

- 1 Follow the instructions on the glucagon kit to mix the powder and liquid.
- 2 Measure the correct dose of glucagon into the syringe.

 The correct dose for ______ is _____ mg
- 3 Inject the glucagon into the person's thigh or arm. You can inject the medicine under the skin or into the muscle.
- **4** Roll the person onto his or her side. Glucagon can cause vomiting, and you want to make sure the person doesn't choke.
- **5** Call the sick person's doctor for more instructions. The phone number is:
- 6 If the sick person doesn't get better within 5 minutes, call 911. Throw out any of the glucagon you don't use. Replace the glucagon right away so it will be available the next time it's needed.

