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Back to Basics: Proper Testing of Your Blood Pressure

Most people do not have their blood pressures taken properly when they visit the doctor’s office or when they check their own blood pressures at home. Here is the method recommended by Dr. Kathleen Wyne that will produce the most accurate results:

1. Sit quietly for at least 5 minutes in a chair, with your feet on the floor and your arm supported at heart level before having your blood pressure checked.
2. Avoid caffeine, exercise and smoking for at least 30 minutes before the blood pressure is taken.
3. Measure your blood pressure in both arms at the first visit with a new doctor or clinic.
4. For later measurements, use the same arm each time and make sure this is documented in your medical record.
5. Be sure the cuff is the right size. Larger cuffs will be needed for larger arms and smaller cuffs will be needed for smaller arms.
6. The blood pressure should be taken at least twice and the measurements averaged. Even better is taking the average of three measurements.
7. If a person has problems with hypotension (or feeling faint when standing up), the blood pressure should be taken standing sometimes.
Best Injection Techniques

If you inject insulin using a pen or syringe, you need to learn to do it safely. Insulin must be injected into the fatty tissue just under the skin. Believe it or not, most people have skin that is about 1.25-3.25 millimeters thick. Even people who weigh more still have similar ranges of skin thickness. What is different is how much fat is under the skin. To make injections more comfortable, use the shortest and thinnest needles available. For pen needles that is about 4 millimeters long and for the needle on a syringe that is 6 millimeters long. Any longer and you will be more likely to inject into the muscle and not the fatty tissue.

If the injection does not go into the fatty tissue under your skin, insulin absorption will be less predictable. You may then experience low blood glucose. This is more likely if the insulin goes into a muscle that would be exercised.

Most adults can inject at a 90 degree angle into the skin without having to pinch skin up if they use a 4-5 millimeter needle. For most children, however, a skin pinch will be needed. To learn more about doing an injection, go to www.phartoonz.com/2010/10/24/how-to-give-an-insulin-injection/.

Injecting insulin or other medications with pre-filled pens requires slightly different techniques. This will vary depending on the medicine used. Be sure you ask your doctor, diabetes educator, or pharmacist to show you the correct technique for the medicine you are using. Instructions with pictures are also included with each new prescription and are available on the website for each product. Correct technique is very important to make sure you receive the correct dose each time and avoid waste of expensive medicines!

Also take care to rotate injection sites. If you inject the same area often, fatty lumps may appear under the skin which reduces insulin absorption. These lumps are unattractive and feel hard and rubbery. This is called hyperlipotrophy. If you have been injecting into these fatty lumps and then change to a site without a fatty lump, you may have a low blood sugar reaction since the absorption will be different.
How to Stay Safe in the Workplace

Have you ever feared not getting a job because of your diabetes? Have you even hidden your diabetes at work because you feared that they would treat you differently? Today, thanks to the Americans with Disabilities Act, employers must treat you and other workers with diabetes fairly. Even at a job interview, you cannot be asked about your current health status or any illness you might inherit. However, once a job is offered, an employer can ask for your medical history, but only if all other employees must provide it as well.

Your boss may worry that your diabetes will create an unsafe work environment. For some jobs, such as police officers or firefighters, yearly medical exams can ensure these jobs are done safely. However, for a desk job such standards are seldom needed.

For your own safety, explain to your employer what you need to manage your diabetes on the job. For instance, you should be able to check your blood sugar any time during the day. Then, if your blood sugar is low, you should be able to treat it with a snack or drink containing carbohydrate. Regular monitoring will reduce your risk of low and high blood glucose, which can stop you from doing your job well.

If you have concerns about handling your diabetes on the job, or need help explaining your diabetes to your boss, work with your health care provider to design an action plan that will suit your worksite needs. The American Diabetes Association is a great resource for information on diabetes in the workplace. Visit www.diabetes.org for information or to connect with an advocate if you need assistance with a worksite issue related to your diabetes.
Quick Chili

16 ounces ground beef (less than 5% fat)
1 15-ounce can pinto beans, undrained
1 onion, chopped
1 tablespoon chili powder
1 can Campbell’s Healthy Request condensed tomato soup, undiluted

2. Add soup, beans and chili powder.
3. Cook covered for 30 minutes on low.
4. Serve with a salad and cornbread.

Makes 4 servings

Nutrition analysis:
Calories: 344  Carbohydrate: 30 grams  Protein: 36 grams
Fat: 9 grams  Saturated fat: 3 grams  Cholesterol: 86 milligrams
Sodium: 632 milligrams  Fiber: 6 grams

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Dear Friend,

*Diabetes Life Lines* is a bi-monthly publication sent to you by your local county Extension agent.

It is written by an Extension Nutrition and Health Specialist and other health professionals from the University of Georgia. This newsletter brings you the latest information on diabetes self-management, healthy recipes and news about important diabetes-related events.

If you would like more information, please contact your local county Extension Office.

Yours truly,

County Extension Agent