



## Safe Insulin Administration

Insulin, one of the primary medications to treat diabetes or hyperglycemia, is a high-alert medication. High-alert medications are more likely to cause significant harm to the patient even when used as intended. Data published in 2008 reported that insulin was the leading drug involved in harmful medication errors, representing 16% of all medication error events with reported harm. Therefore, before administering any insulin dose – it is imperative to STOP and follow the top 5 Rights of Medication Administration.

1. Right Patient – Using double identifiers, compare the medication order to the patient. Prior to giving the insulin, inform the patient of the most current blood glucose level, the full name of the insulin, their dose and the intended action of the medication.
2. Right Medication – Perform a triple check of the medication label. Many insulin products have look-alike names, (Novo**LOG**, (Novo**LIN**). Patient specific insulin pens should be stored in a way that prevents them from inadvertently being used on more than one patient.
3. Right Dose – Check the vial label with the medication order. Confusion can occur with insulin mixtures such as Huma**LOG** 75/25 and Huma**LIN** 70/30. Errors can occur when rapid acting insulin is confused with short acting insulin. Eliminate error prone abbreviations such as u, sc and sq
4. Right Time – Verify the schedule with the order. Studies suggest that less than half the time patients in the hospital have their glucose level monitored and receive prescribed insulin doses within an acceptable timeframe. Coordination of insulin with meals and glucose monitoring varies significantly in inpatient settings.
5. Right Route – Improper injection techniques can contribute to poor glycemic control. Accidental IM injection increases pain and can affect glucose control.

Even though insulin is an extremely common drug, it is important that the nurse remains cognizant of the dangers inherent in its use. Consistently practicing the rights of safe medication administration will help to protect patients from harm.