

Discussing Patient Concerns About Insulin Dosing and Adherence



This guide is designed to help you engage in conversations with patients who have type 2 diabetes, need to intensify insulin therapy, and find it challenging to adhere to their treatment regimen, like Jackie. Her HbA1C is currently 9.2%, and she is taking extended-release metformin, a DPP-4 inhibitor, and long-acting basal insulin but does not want to take additional injections.

THE SUGGESTION OF A MORE INTENSIVE TREATMENT REGIMEN can be a major cause of anxiety or concern for patients like Jackie, who are already experiencing issues with medication adherence. Insulin intensification and persistence, which can be challenging for many patients, are essential for obtaining glycemic control and improving health and well-being. By understanding the challenges faced by your patients, you can provide knowledge and support to help them adhere to their treatment regimen.

Personalized Insulin Regimen

A personalized insulin regimen is crucial. Healthcare providers must consider not only patients' willingness and ability to take insulin but also their eating, sleeping, and activity patterns and their preferences for a flexible schedule. Fortunately, today's insulin preparations and delivery devices make insulin therapy much less complicated than in the past. New technologies like mobile phone apps and online programs can also empower patients to take an active role in their care. Education and support are key—not only at the initiation of insulin therapy but also when dose intensification is needed.

"I just can't remember to take insulin like I'm supposed to. I'm not even very good with my other medicines."



Strategies to Try

Try to identify the patient's reason for suboptimal adherence.

- ▶ "What does taking insulin mean to you?"
- ▶ "What is happening when it's time to take your insulin dose (at home, work, and so on)?"
- ▶ "What would it look like if everything were going right with your diabetes management?"

Suggest tips to help patients remember to take insulin every day.

- ▶ "Have you tried storing your insulin next to your coffee mug? Or taking it at the same time that you brush your teeth?"
- ▶ "Do you use apps on your phone? We can help you find one that works for you."



Offer support.

- ▶ "We're here to help you. What can we do to help you remember to take your injections?"

Insulin Initiation/Intensification

Some patients believe that the need for insulin therapy or intensification indicates that their diabetes

"I'm worried about taking too much insulin. Aren't I already doing enough?"

has progressed to a more serious phase and that they have a higher risk of developing complications.



Strategies to Try



Find out why the patient is reluctant to intensify the insulin regimen.

- ▶ “Are you worried that your diabetes is getting worse?”
- ▶ “Are you concerned about the number of insulin doses needed?”

Explain the need for altering the insulin treatment plan, and ask for the patient’s input.

- ▶ “We need to think about what else we can do to get your diabetes under better control. Do you have any thoughts or concerns about this?”
- ▶ “What are your goals with your diabetes? How do you think we can get there?”

As soon as you feel you may be pushing too hard, stop and try another approach. Work with patients, not against them.

- ▶ “You are not alone. Let’s work together to get your diabetes under better control.”

Independence and Lifestyle

A concern among people with diabetes is that insulin therapy will negatively affect their independence and lifestyle. They may be worried about injecting insulin away from home, especially in front of others, or feel inconvenienced by the need to carry syringes and needles. In addition, diabetes and insulin may be perceived negatively in different cultures, so patients may worry about family members and friends offering unsolicited opinions and passing judgment.



“Taking insulin more than once a day is very inconvenient for me.”



Strategies to Try



If the patient works, find out whether she feels supported when checking her blood glucose or administering insulin at her workplace.

- ▶ “Do you have a private place at work where you can take your insulin?”
- ▶ “Do you need to travel for work? We can help you plan your supplies and ways to adjust your dosing schedule for different time zones.”



Ask about the role of family members and friends in the patient’s care. Consider including them in discussions about treatment.

- ▶ “Would you like to invite your daughter to come to our next visit?”

Ask about cultural health beliefs or practices that might affect how the patient perceives diabetes and its treatment.

- ▶ “Do you have any cultural or religious practices that play a role in how you manage your diabetes?”
- ▶ “Do you or your family need to fast at certain times?”