

Needles for pre-filled and reusable Pens

Area Prescribing Committee Position Statement

The prescribing of insulin pen needles that cost greater than £5 per 100 needles is not supported by Barnsley Area Prescribing Committee (APC) for any indication. Insulin pen needles above this threshold have a grey non formulary classification.

In line with NHS England guidance:

- No new patients should be initiated on insulin pen needles that cost greater than £5 per 100 needles.***
- Patients currently prescribed insulin pen needles that cost greater than £5 per 100 needles should have their prescription reviewed and the insulin pen needles switched to the Barnsley formulary brand of choice (GlucRx Carepoint - first choice, BD Viva – second choice).***
- Safety needles should not be prescribed in primary care unless the exceptional circumstances detailed in this position statement are met.***

Insulin Pen Needles are included in the NHS England guidance '***Items which should not routinely be prescribed in Primary Care***' with no exceptions.¹

In Barnsley, primary care expenditure on insulin pen needles between March 2020 and March 2021 was approximately £116,000.

The Medicines Management Team can support primary care prescribers in reviewing patients and deprescribing insulin pen needles costing greater than £5 per 100 needles.

Background¹

Insulin pen needles are used by diabetic patients in pre-filled and re-useable insulin pens. Pen needles are available in a complete range of sizes from 4mm to 12mm. Different needles fit different pens; however some pen needles will fit all major insulin delivery pen devices currently available.

Rationale for deprescribing certain insulin pen needles^{1,2,3,4}

- There are many different types of insulin pen needles available with varying cost. Rationalising use ensures the most cost-effective options are used first line.
- The forum for injection technique ([FIT](#)) UK recommends a 4mm needle as the safest pen needle for adults and children regardless of age, gender and Body Mass Index. They also state a 4mm pen needle inserted perpendicularly is long enough to penetrate the skin and enter subcutaneous tissues, with little risk of intramuscular injection.
- Patients currently using longer pen needle lengths (6mm, 8mm and 12mm), should be advised a change to a shorter length needle (4mm or 5mm) with advice from a healthcare professional on the correct injection technique.

Deprescribing^{1,2,3,4,5}

- Counsel the patient to help them understand that using a 4mm needle is the most appropriate and provide injection technique advice when switching from longer length needles. If the patient needs to

use needle lengths greater than 4mm or a syringe they must use a correctly lifted skin fold to avoid intramuscular injection.

- Counsel the patient that the new brand of needles is equally as effective as the old brand and that they should not notice a difference in use. In some cases the thickness of the needle may be slightly thinner than the old brand.
- Ensure patients are educated about the safe disposal of needles via a sharps bin.
- Prescribe a Sharps guard yellow 1litre/ Sharpsafe 1litre bin if required on prescription. These may then be returned to designated sites across Barnsley. This guidance may be accessed at: <https://psnc.org.uk/barnsley-lpc/resources/sharps-bin-disposal-locations/>

Safety needles

- Safety needles incorporate an automatic safety lock. These are for the benefit of healthcare workers to avoid needle stick injury. For patients unable to self-administer it may be appropriate for the healthcare professional to use a safety needle but these would not be prescribed on an FP10 prescription. It is the healthcare professional employer's responsibility to provide these for their staff.
- In exceptional circumstances, for third party carers e.g. school, care home, childminder, relative etc, safety needles may be prescribed on an FP10. The first line cost effective choice is GlucoRx safety needles. This use and reason should be clearly documented in the patient's notes.
- If the patient does not meet the exceptional circumstances criteria and still wishes to use a safety needle they should be advised that they can be purchased over-the-counter (OTC) with the support of the community pharmacist. Please advise patient of the expected retail price of the recommended safety needle (see table below).

Patient information

- A patient information leaflet explaining the changes to insulin pen needle prescribing is available: <https://www.prescqipp.info/umbraco/surface/authorisedmediasurface/index?url=%2fmedia%2f4157%2fpatient-information-changes-to-needles-for-insulin-pens-prescribing.pdf>

Cost⁵

Needle	Size	Cost (100)
GlucoRX Carepoint insulin pen needles (first line brand of choice)	31G x 4mm	£2.75
GlucoRX Carepoint insulin pen needles (first line brand of choice)	31G x 5mm	£2.75
BD Viva insulin pen needles (second line brand of choice)	32G x 4mm	£3.59
BD Viva insulin pen needles (second line brand of choice)	31G x 5mm	£3.59
Safety Needles (for use in exceptional circumstances only as listed above):		
GlucoRx safety needles (first line brand of choice)	30G x 5mm	£12.95 (Expected retail cost £23.31)
Neon Verifine Safety	31G x 5mm	£14.89 (Expected retail cost £26.80)

References

1. NHS England guidance 'Items which should not routinely be prescribed in Primary Care: Guidance for CCGs'. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/items-which-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care-v2.1.pdf> <Accessed Jan 2020>
2. FIT UK & IRE Injection and Infusion Technique Recommendations 5th edition II December 20. Page 7, point 2. Available at: http://fit4diabetes.com/files/3816/2374/8804/BD5119_FIT_UK_Recommendations_2020_AW.pdf < Accessed July 2021>
3. Diabetes Care Community (FIT technique plus needle length). Available at: http://fit4diabetes.com/files/5413/6761/5623/FIT_Technique_Plus_Needle_Length.pdf <Accessed June 2021>.
4. PrescQipp bulletin 103 Hypodermic insulin devices for patients with type 2 diabetes <https://www.prescqipp.info/umbraco/surface/authorisedmediasurface/index?url=%2fmedia%2f1364%2fb103-insulin-needles-briefing-21.pdf> <Accessed June 2021>
5. MIMS online. Available via the medicines management team.<Accessed May 2021>

Development Process

This position statement was ratified at the Area Prescribing Committee on 8th December 2021.

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