

SLIDING SCALE DIABETES CARE GUIDE

For Families & Caregivers in Central Texas
By Williams Senior Transition Services

QUICK START CHECKLIST

- Get prescribed sliding scale chart from doctor
- Learn blood sugar monitoring technique
- Practice insulin injection with nurse
- Stock emergency supplies (glucose, glucagon kit)
- Schedule diabetes education class

PART 1: UNDERSTANDING SLIDING SCALE

What Does Sliding Scale Mean?

Simple Version: The amount of insulin changes based on blood sugar level—it "slides" up or down depending on what the body needs RIGHT NOW.

High blood sugar = More insulin | Low blood sugar = Less insulin

PART 2: YOUR DAILY ROUTINE

Morning (Before Breakfast)

1. 7:00 AM → Check blood sugar with finger stick
2. 7:02 AM → Record reading
3. 7:03 AM → Look at sliding scale chart
4. 7:04 AM → Give insulin injection
5. 7:20 AM → Eat breakfast

PART 3: BLOOD SUGAR TARGETS

Healthy Blood Sugar Ranges

- Normal (Non-Diabetic): 70-100 mg/dL
- Upon waking: 80-130 mg/dL
- Before meals: 80-130 mg/dL
- After meals: Less than 180 mg/dL
- Bedtime: 100-150 mg/dL

PART 4: SAMPLE SLIDING SCALE CHART

⚠ THIS IS AN EXAMPLE ONLY - USE YOUR DOCTOR'S PRESCRIBED CHART

Blood Sugar Level	Insulin Dose
Less than 150 mg/dL	0 units (skip this dose)
150-200 mg/dL	2 units
201-250 mg/dL	4 units
251-300 mg/dL	6 units
301-350 mg/dL	8 units
351+ mg/dL	10 units + CALL DOCTOR

PART 5: INSULIN TYPES & HOW THEY WORK

Rapid-Acting Insulin (Mealtime Insulin)

Brand names: Humalog, NovoLog, Apidra

- Starts working: 10-15 minutes
- Peak strength: 1-2 hours
- Lasts: ~4 hours
- Used for: Before meals (sliding scale)

Long-Acting Insulin (Background Insulin)

Brand names: Lantus, Levemir, Tresiba

- Starts working: 1-2 hours
- Duration: 24+ hours
- Used for: Steady baseline (same dose daily)

PART 6: INJECTION TECHNIQUE

Step-by-Step Guide

6. Gather supplies: Insulin pen/syringe, new needle, alcohol wipe, prescribed insulin
7. Wash hands with soap and water
8. If using vial: roll gently to mix (don't shake)
9. Check expiration date
10. Choose injection site and clean with alcohol wipe
11. Gently pinch fatty tissue
12. Insert needle at 90-degree angle
13. Push plunger slowly and steadily
14. Dispose of needle in sharps container (NOT regular trash)

Injection Sites

- Abdomen (preferred - fastest absorption)
- Upper arm (outer surface)
- Thigh (outer surface)
- Buttocks

⚠️ IMPORTANT: ROTATE SITES - use different spot each injection

PART 7: BLOOD SUGAR MONITORING

Using a Glucose Meter

15. Wash hands with warm water and soap
16. Dry hands completely
17. Insert test strip into meter
18. Use lancet to prick side of fingertip
19. Touch blood drop to test strip
20. Wait for reading (usually 5 seconds)
21. Record reading immediately
22. Dispose of lancet in sharps container

PART 8: EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Low Blood Sugar (Hypoglycemia)

Warning Signs:

- Shakiness, sweating
- Confusion, difficulty thinking
- Sudden hunger
- Headache, dizziness
- Pale skin, rapid heartbeat

IMMEDIATE TREATMENT - "Rule of 15":

23. CHECK blood sugar if possible
24. GIVE 15 grams of fast carbs (3-4 glucose tablets, 4oz juice, 1 tbsp honey, or 6 crackers)
25. WAIT 15 minutes
26. RECHECK blood sugar
27. IF STILL LOW: repeat steps 2-4
28. Once stable: eat snack with protein/fat (peanut butter, cheese, nuts)

High Blood Sugar (Hyperglycemia)

Warning Signs:

- Excessive thirst
- Frequent urination
- Blurred vision
- Fatigue, weakness
- Headache
- Fruity-smelling breath or difficulty breathing (EMERGENCY!)

⚠ CALL 911 if fruity breath, difficulty breathing, severe confusion, or inability to wake person

PART 9: MEDICATION STORAGE

Unopened Insulin (Before Use)

- Refrigerate 36-46°F
- Keep on main refrigerator shelves (not door)
- Use by expiration date
- Avoid freezing and direct sunlight

Open/Current Insulin (In Use)

- Room temperature (59-86°F)
- Cool, dark place (desk drawer, bedside table)
- Discard 28 days after opening
- Avoid hot cars and sunny windows

PART 10: EMERGENCY CONTACTS & SUPPLIES

Emergency Contacts

- Doctor: _____ Phone: _____
- Diabetes Educator: _____ Phone: _____
- Pharmacy: _____ Phone: _____
- Emergency: 911

Daily Supplies to Keep on Hand

- Glucose meter & extra batteries
- Lancets
- Test strips (in original container)
- Alcohol wipes
- Insulin (current + backup)
- Insulin needles
- Sharps container

Emergency Supplies

- Glucagon emergency kit (multiple locations)
- Fast-acting carbs (glucose tablets, juice boxes, honey)
- Medical alert bracelet (wear 24/7)
- Medical alert card (in wallet)

FINAL REMINDERS

29. This is manageable. Thousands of people successfully use sliding scale insulin every day.
30. Ask questions. Your doctor and diabetes educator are there to help.
31. Nobody's perfect. Mistakes happen. Learn and move forward.
32. You're doing great. Caring for someone with diabetes is meaningful, important work.
33. It gets easier. The first weeks are hardest. Soon it becomes routine.

This guide is educational only and does not replace medical advice from a licensed healthcare provider. Always follow your doctor's specific instructions and sliding scale chart.

Williams Senior Transition Services

Bilingual (English/Spanish) Senior Placement Services
Central Texas: Travis, Williamson, Hays, Bastrop Counties