

Diabetes Pen Needles and Safety Needles Position Statement

Summary

Pen Needles

NHS South West London recommends the use of pen needles costing less than £3 per 100 needles for any patient with diabetes. NHS England's [guidance](#) advises that pen needles costing over £5 per 100 needles should not be initiated for any new patients with diabetes. Since the guidance was last updated in 2019, the prices of many pen needles have reduced and there are a significant number of needles that now cost less than £3 per 100 needles.

Safety Needles

NHS South West London recommends the use of safety needles costing less than £13 per 100 needles where these are clinically appropriate. It must be noted that different safety needles available offer varying protection. Some have dual protection mechanisms, whilst others do not. The ones with dual protection are more expensive.

Rationale

- Pen needles are available in a range of sizes from 4mm to 12mm.
- All needles have universal fit on all leading insulin pen delivery devices.
- Needles conform to latest pen needle standards-ISO 11608-2:2012

Preferred Pen Needles Costing less than £3 per 100 Needles

- **Insupen® Original available in:**
 - 4mm: 32/33 gauge
 - 5mm: 31 gauge
 - 6mm: 31/32 gauge
- **Microdot® Max available in:**
 - 4mm: 32 gauge
 - 6mm: 31 gauge
- **Glucorx® Carepoint available in:**
 - 4mm/5mm/6mm: 31 gauge
- **Glucorx® Carepoint Ultra available in:**
 - 4mm: 32 gauge
- **Greenfine® available in:**
 - 4mm: 32 gauge

- 5mm/6mm: 31 gauge

Preferred Safety Pen Needles Costing less than £13 per 100 Needles

- **Microdot Max Safety Pen Needles available in:**
 - 5mm: 30 gauge
- **Glucorx Safety Pen Needles available in:**
 - 5mm: 30 gauge

Guidance for clinicians

- No new patients should be initiated on pen needles costing more than £3 per 100 needles.
- Prescribe by brand to ensure continuity of supply of the same product.
- Patients currently receiving pen needles costing more than £3 per 100 needles should be reviewed and changed to one of the preferred needles.
- Where safety needles are indicated, no new patients should be initiated on safety needles costing more than £13 per 100 needles, unless the preferred products are not considered appropriate.
- Patients currently receiving safety needles costing more than £13 per 100 needles should be reviewed and changed to one of the preferred needles where this is clinically appropriate.
- As per [NHSE guidance](#), for patients currently using longer pen needle lengths (8mm,12mm), it is advisable to review and change to a shorter needle length (≤ 6 mm) but only after discussion with a healthcare professional, to ensure patients receive advice on the correct injection technique (e.g. whether a skin lift is required). Detailed advice on injection technique, based on needle length prescribed, can be found on the [Forum for Injection Technique \(FIT\) website](#).
- Using shorter length needles helps to prevent intramuscular (IM) injection of insulin. (IM injection of insulin should be avoided as it can result in unpredictable blood glucose levels). The [FIT website](#) considers the 4mm needle to be the safest pen needle for adults and children regardless of age, gender and BMI. Therefore, the most cost effective 4mm needles should be used.
- Syringe or pen needles should only be used once. Reusing insulin needles is not optimal practice and patients should be discouraged from doing so.
- When prescribing pen needles, patients should be advised on safe disposal arrangements.
- Where patients are not able to administer their own insulin, the use of safety needles should be considered first line. Where the third-party administering the insulin is a healthcare professional it is the employer's responsibility to supply the safety device and GPs should not be asked to prescribe. For other third-party carers employed within non healthcare settings e.g. schools, care homes, etc. the safety needles may need to be prescribed by the GP. For

patients currently prescribed safety needles, review the need for the prescription. If appropriate, then prescribe safety needles costing less than £13 per 100 needles.

- The use of safety needles should be considered for patients known to have a blood borne virus e.g. HIV, hepatitis etc or who are known to be aggressive.
- For new initiations in children, where it is important that an injection is as painless as possible, GlucoRx FinePoint (4mm, 4mm Ultra, 5mm or 6mm) needles are recommended as they have a 5-bevel needle tip. Consider the needle gauge when prescribing for younger/smaller patients as painful injections may result in insulin avoidance. The gauge is a measure of thickness of a needle - the higher the gauge, the thinner the needle. Gauges range from 29 (thickest) to 33 (thinnest).

Exclusion criteria

- Aged under 18 years.
- Pregnant patients (these patients will be under the care of maternity services).
- Patients who require 'click or twist' pen needles for dexterity issues.
- Patients prescribed exenatide prolonged release (Bydureon®), dulaglutide (Trulicity®) and semaglutide (Ozempic®), as these products already have the needles supplied in the medication box.

References

- Drug Tariff December 2023
- The Forum for Injection Testing (FIT) [website](#) (Accessed 5th December 2023)
- [PrescQIPP CIC Drugs to Review for Optimised Prescribing](#), Needles for Pre-Filled and Reusable Insulin (Accessed 5th December 2023)

Document History

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