



Nevada State Health Division Technical Bulletin



Topic: Risk of Transmission of Blood-Borne Pathogens from Shared Use of Insulin Pens
Section/Program: Bureau of Health Statistics, Planning, Epidemiology, and Response/Office of Epidemiology
Date: December 15, 2010

TO: Health Care Providers and Patients

The Nevada State Health Division is reminding health care professionals and patients that insulin pens and insulin cartridges should not be used to give medication to multiple patients. In March, 2009, the FDA stated the sharing of insulin pens could result in the transmission of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the hepatitis viruses, and other blood-borne diseases. Insulin pens are not designed, and are not safe, for one pen to be used for more than one patient, even if the needles are changed between patients because of blood contamination of the pen reservoir could result in transmission of already existing blood-borne pathogens from the previous user.

What are insulin pens?

Insulin pens are pen-shaped injector devices that contain a disposable needle and either an insulin reservoir or an insulin cartridge. The devices typically hold enough insulin for a patient to self-administer several doses of insulin before the reservoir or cartridge is empty.

All insulin pens are approved only for single-use (one device for only one patient). They are designed to be safe for one patient to use one pen multiple times with a new, fresh needle for each injection.

Recommendations and Information for Health Care Professionals Regarding Insulin Pens and Insulin Cartridges, and other reusable injector devices:

- Insulin pens containing multiple doses of insulin are meant for use **by a single patient only**, and are not to be shared between patients.
- Identifying the insulin pen with the **name of the patient and other patient identifiers** provides a mechanism for verifying that the correct pen is used on the correct patient, and can help minimize medication errors. Ensure the identifying patient information does not obstruct the dosing window or other product information such as the product name and strength.
- Be aware the likelihood of sharing insulin pens and cartridges is increased when the pens are not marked with the patient name or other patient identifiers.
- If the pen does not have a retractable needle, the disposable needle should be removed from the insulin pen and properly discarded after each injection. A new needle should be attached to the insulin pen before each new injection.
- Safe injection practices must be implemented at all times as the same risks may exist with shared use of any reusable injection device.
- Hospitals and other health care facilities should review their policies and educate their staff regarding safe use of insulin pens.
- Once the patient is discharged from the hospital, the patient's insulin pen must be sent home with the patient or promptly discarded.



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Information for Health Care Professionals to Provide When Counseling Patients:

- Patients should be instructed that insulin pens containing multiple doses are meant for use **by a single patient only.**
- Patients should be instructed to never share their insulin pens with another person.
- Patients should be advised that sharing of their insulin pens could result in transmission of hepatitis viruses, HIV, or other blood-borne pathogens.
- Patients must remove and discard the needle after each use and attach a new needle for each new injection.

For more information please visit the following web-sites:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

<http://www.cdc.gov/injectionsafety/blood-glucose-monitoring.html>

Food and Drug Administration (FDA):

<http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm129955.htm>

<http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/PostmarketDrugSafetyInformationforPatientsandProviders/DrugSafetyInformationforHeathcareProfessionals/ucm133352.htm>

Approved by: _____

Handwritten signature of Tracey D. Green, MD in blue ink.

Tracey D. Green, MD, State Health Officer

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Richard Whitley, Administrator, Nevada State Health Division