

Emergency hospital stay and diabetes management

Being admitted to hospital due to an emergency (whether related or unrelated to diabetes) can be unsettling. It can also create confusion around your diabetes management as lines of responsibility can be blurred in hospital. Being admitted to hospital can also be stressful depending on your level of health and your ability to self-manage your diabetes, along with the hospital's policies regarding risk management. As the person living with diabetes you have the expertise in your individual needs and this doesn't necessarily change in a controlled medical environment. While medical staff have the best of intentions, circumstances can occasionally mean your specific diabetes needs may be overlooked.

Speak up

It's important to trust yourself and your experience in managing your diabetes. If you feel uncomfortable or know something is wrong, don't be afraid to be your own advocate and voice your concerns.

You may need to speak up when:

- you are in hospital for a condition unrelated to diabetes – you might need to remind doctors and nurses that you have diabetes and which type. Discuss being able to continue managing your blood glucose level (BGL) checks and insulin. Ask to see the endocrinology registrar
- the hospital is managing your diabetes during your stay and you have concerns around how frequently they are checking your BGL
- you are concerned that you've been given too much or too little insulin
- you are experiencing a hypo.

Maintaining your self-confidence about your diabetes care in hospital can be difficult. It's important to remember that you are the expert in managing your diabetes. You are entitled to have your concerns taken seriously. If you don't feel comfortable with a particular course of treatment or don't think you're being listened to, persist until you find a nurse or doctor who is willing to work with you.

If you are not able to resolve a disagreement or concern you have in relation to your treatment, ask the nurse manager or doctor to link you to a patient representative who works to help resolve complaints and will support you as a consumer while balancing your rights and the protocols of the hospital. The Health Services Commissioner is the primary point of contact for people who have a complaint about a healthcare service that is not satisfactorily resolved.

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When you use a pump

With the technology available to treat type 1 diabetes constantly changing, not all doctors and nurses understand how a pump works or where it fits into the hospital environment. Talk with the doctors and nurses about using your pump throughout your stay and make it clear that using a pump is how you prefer to manage your diabetes. If the hospital is insistent on removing the pump and treating your diabetes, make sure they understand your urgent need for an alternate method of insulin delivery to avoid developing high blood glucose levels.

If you're undergoing surgery it may be possible to arrange with the surgeon and anaesthetist for the pump to remain attached during the procedure. Alternatively, intravenous insulin and fluids may be started prior to the day surgery or procedure. Generally you should be able to use a pump for surgical procedures requiring local anaesthetic.

Your rights

The Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights www.health.vic.gov.au/patientcharter/ sets out the level of care you should expect during your hospital stay. The charter covers a number of key areas including:

- **Access:** a right to access healthcare
- **Safety:** a right to receive safe and high quality healthcare
- **Respect:** a right to be shown respect and to be treated with dignity and consideration
- **Communication:** a right to be informed about services, treatment, options and costs in a clear and open way
- **Participation:** a right to be included in decisions and make choices about your health care
- **Privacy:** a right to privacy and confidentiality of your personal information
- **Comment:** a right to comment on your healthcare and to have your concerns addressed.