

# Pen Needles

Don't go poking around—know the right needle for you

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Ted Morrison

Insulin pens are a convenient delivery system for quick dosing. In order to use one, you will need to choose a pen needle that meets your needs and works with the devices you use. Remember that a fresh, sharp needle for each injection is best practice and can reduce any pain from giving yourself a shot. Here are a few things to consider when picking a pen needle.

## Length

Pen needles come in a wide range of lengths—from 4 to nearly 13 millimeters (see below). According to

studies published in the journal *Diabetes Technology and Therapeutics*, a short pen needle can be used effectively for people of all sizes. Kids in particular may want to use a short needle to avoid injecting insulin into the muscle, according to research published in a 2012 issue of *Pediatric Diabetes*.

## Width

It is the width of a pen needle, and not its length, that can cause painful sensations upon injection. Needle widths are measured by gauge, and the higher the number, the thinner the needle. Needle gauges range from 29 to 32. The advantages of a thicker needle include the ability to give a larger dose more quickly, and a lower risk for leaks from the skin, which can occur when insulin does not reach the fatty tissue where it needs to be deposited. Thicker needles also require less effort to deliver a dose because more insulin can be delivered quickly.

## Special features

Some pen needles have special features that may make them more helpful to you. For example, some click into the pen, rather than twisting on, which may be easier if you have painful finger joints or reduced sensation of touch. Others have a built-in remover that can help you avoid accidental pricks when changing a needle. Some have safety features, such as the BD AutoShield Duo, which covers the needle before and after use to prevent contamination. Hiding the needle until the moment of use can also be helpful for those with a fear of needles.

**American Diabetes Association**, 2451 Crystal Drive, Suite 900, Arlington, VA 22202

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