After you have used insulin for a while, you and your health care provider may decide that you can make changes to your insulin dose on your own. Your health care provider and the information here will help you learn how to take the right dose of your insulin. You will make these adjustments based on your blood sugar results.

This handout ONLY gives information on how to adjust the NPH or Lente insulin that you take at bedtime. If you are taking other types of insulin at other times, continue them as prescribed. Your provider will tell you if you need to adjustment to your other insulin doses.

The Basics: NPH and Lente Insulin

NPH and Lente insulins have about the same time schedule for when they start to work and how long they remain active in your body after injection:

Start to work: 2-4 hours
Greatest effect: 6-8 hours
Lasts: 14-20 hours

This means that when you take your NPH or Lente insulin at bedtime, you can check its maximum effect by testing your morning blood sugar.

HE/SD 01/03
**Low Blood Sugar**

Low blood sugar (below 70 mg/dl) is the most common side effect of taking insulin. If your blood sugar goes below 60 -70 mg/dl you may begin to feel **sweaty, shaky, nervous, irritable, lightheaded or confused.** If you have these symptoms you should check your blood sugar right away if possible* AND:

- Drink 8 ounces of skim milk **OR**
- Eat several crackers with cheese **OR**
- Eat a piece of fruit

**If your blood sugar is between 60 and 70 mg/dl:**

- Drink 4 ounces of fruit juice **or** regular soda **OR**
- Chew and swallow 5-6 Lifesavers **or** 2-3 hard candies **OR**
- Chew 15 grams of glucose tablets **or** swallow 15 grams of glucose gel

After 15 minutes, check your blood sugar again. If it is still below 70 mg/dl take another serving of one of the foods listed.

After your blood sugar has reached 70 mg/dl or higher eat a snack (example ½ sandwich and a glass of skim milk) or your regular meal to prevent another low blood sugar reaction.

A very low blood sugar can cause a person to lose consciousness or pass out. **DO NOT DELAY TREATMENT!**

*If you feel like your blood sugar is low and you cannot check your blood sugar, you should go ahead and eat or drink one of the foods listed above right away.

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**Keep in Touch**

Please send us a record of your blood sugar results every _____ days/weeks. We will also need to know that type(s) and amount of insulin you are taking and the time(s) of day you take it.

- **Phone:** ____________________________
- **Fax:** ______________________________
- **E-mail:** ____________________________
- **U.S. Postal address:**
  Kaiser Permanente
  4647 Zion Avenue
  San Diego, CA 92120
  Attention: _______________________________
  (Your Provider’s Name and Location)

**Please call if:**

- Your blood sugar goes below 60 mg/dl **OR** if your blood sugar goes below 70 mg/dl more than two times in one week. (Always treat the low blood sugar **before** calling)
- You have any questions about taking insulin or how to adjust your dose.