

Using Glucagon

For patients on insulin and their caregivers

Glucagon is an emergency medicine that may be given to people who have hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) who cannot treat themselves. This handout gives step-by-step directions for giving someone glucagon.

Treating Severely Low Blood Glucose

Severely low blood glucose can cause you to lose consciousness (faint) or have a seizure. If that happens, anything that is put in your mouth could make you choke.

Glucagon is an emergency medicine that is used if your blood glucose drops too low and it is not safe to give you food. It is given by injection (a shot). Others can safely give you a glucagon injection to help raise your blood glucose from sugar stored in your liver.

Family, friends, and co-workers should know that if a person taking insulin for diabetes becomes unconscious or has a seizure, they should give the glucagon FIRST, then call 9-1-1.

Show your family, friends, and co-workers where you keep your glucagon kit and teach them how to use it. They can practice giving a shot by giving you your normal insulin shot with your help. This practice is important. A person who has never given a shot may not be able to do so in an emergency.

What Family Members and Friends Need to Know

- **Act quickly.** Rapid treatment can lessen health risks. Give the glucagon shot **first**, before calling 9-1-1.
- Do not check the person's blood glucose before giving glucagon unless you can do so easily and quickly. If someone who takes insulin loses consciousness or has a seizure, assume that they have severely low blood glucose.



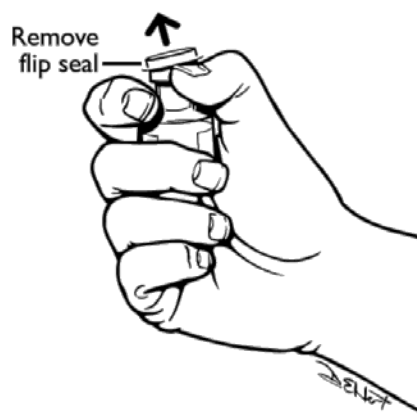
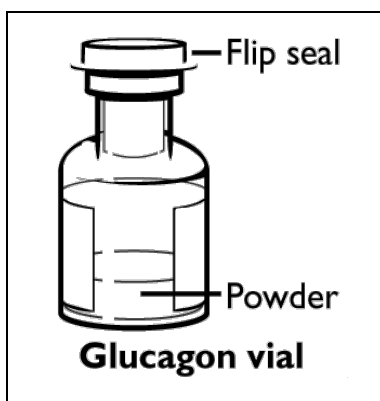
Teach your family, friends, and co-workers how to use your glucagon kit.

But, if the unconscious person is not breathing or has no pulse, do NOT give glucagon. Instead, call 9-1-1 right away and start CPR.

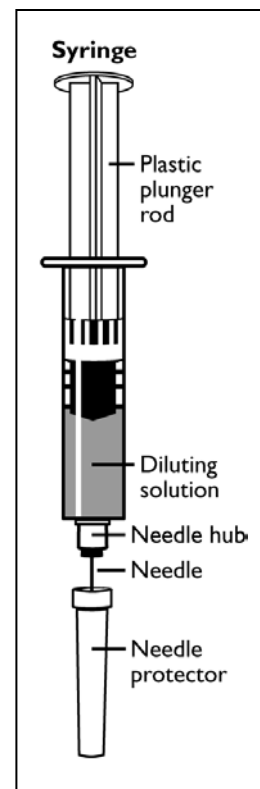
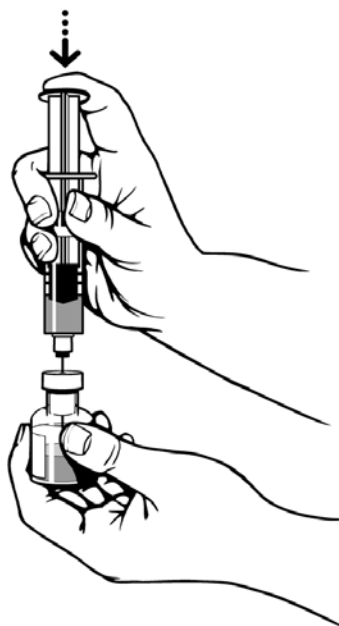
- Turn the patient on their side to prevent choking in case of vomiting. Nausea and vomiting are common side effects of glucagon.
- Follow the instructions below and on the next 2 pages to give the glucagon shot.

Prepare the Glucagon

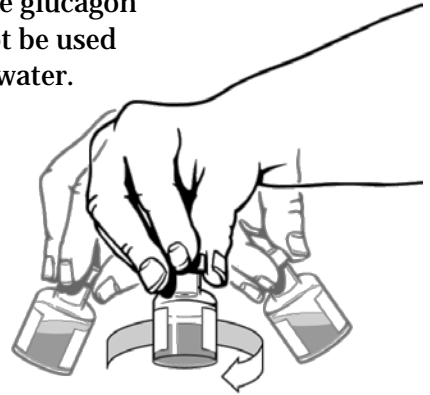
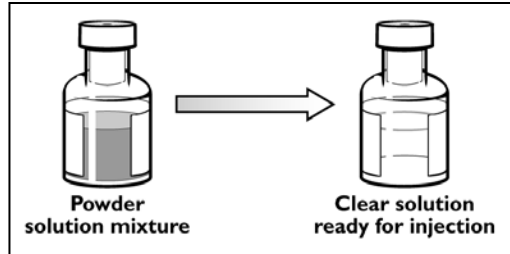
- **Step 1:** Remove the flip-off seal from the bottle of glucagon as shown.



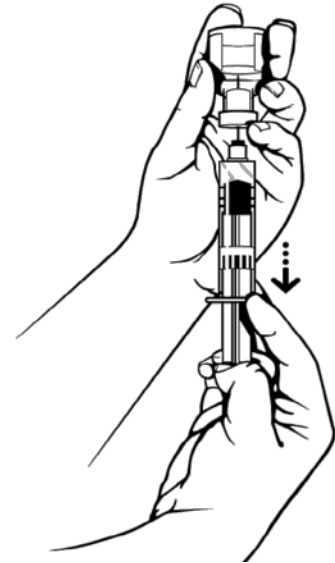
- **Step 2:** Remove the needle protector from the syringe (shot) and inject the entire contents of the syringe into the bottle of glucagon. Remove the syringe from the bottle.



- **Step 3:** Swirl the bottle gently until all the glucagon dissolves completely. Glucagon should not be used unless the mixture is clear and looks like water.



- **Step 4:** Hold the bottle upside down. Using the same syringe, insert the needle through the rubber stopper on the bottle. Make sure the needle tip stays in the fluid, then gently pull back on the plunger rod to withdraw all the fluid from the bottle into the syringe. If the plastic plunger rod separates from the rubber stopper, push the rod back in and turn it clockwise.



Give the Glucagon Shot

- **Step 5:** Insert the needle into the loose tissue of the person's buttock, upper arm, or thigh and inject all of the glucagon fluid. There is no danger of giving the patient too much.



After Giving the Shot

- **Step 6:** Turn the person on their side. When they wake up, they may vomit. Turning them will help prevent choking if they vomit.
- **Step 7: Call 9-1-1 as soon as you have given the glucagon shot. This is a medical emergency! Say that the person has diabetes and has received glucagon.**

After Calling 9-1-1

- Check the person's blood glucose level if you can.
- Feed the person as soon as they wake up and can swallow:
 - If the blood glucose level is under 70 mg/dL, treat with a fast-acting source of sugar such as apple juice or a soda pop that contains sugar.

AND
 - When the blood glucose level is over 100 mg/dL, it is OK to offer a snack or meal. Try to provide carbohydrate and protein, such as crackers and cheese or a meat sandwich.
- If the person does not wake up within 15 minutes, give another shot of glucagon.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

- Diabetes Care Center:
206-598-4882
Box 354691
4225 Roosevelt Way N.E.
Seattle, WA 98105
- Labor and Delivery:
206-598-4616
Box 356079
1959 N.E. Pacific St.
Seattle, WA 98195
- Maternal and Infant Care Clinic:
206-598-4070
Box 356159
1959 N.E. Pacific St.
Seattle, WA 98195