Fasting on Yom Kippur
A Guide for Users of 24-Hour Insulins

CAUTION: As usual we remind our readers not to make insulin adjustments based solely on ideas expressed in this article. Instead, use them as starting points for a thorough discussion with your doctor.

That said, it is still important to note that the pump remains the preferred tool for an insulin-dependant person who is planning to fast. This is because it allow for precise and customized basal (background) insulin adjustments, to match the body’s decreasing need for insulin as the fast wears on. These adjustments are impossible with long-acting insulins, which release a flat, fixed amount of insulin throughout the day.

It is worth stressing that, even on a fast day, one should never entirely skip an injection of long-acting insulin. Remember, that a high blood sugar during a fast can be just as dangerous as a low blood sugar! In fact, your insulin needs for the night of Yom Kippur will probably be the same as on a typical night, especially as the fast is preceded by a large meal. If you do, however, use a bedtime snack to avoid midnight lows, your nighttime Lantus will need to be reduced.
The Animas IR 1250 Insulin Pump

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With the IR 1250 insulin pump, you can:
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According to FWD’s rabbinical advisor, Rav M.M. Weismandl shlita, the insulin pump may be used on Shabbos to infuse both basals and boluses as usual. He also addressed many other issues that may arise while pumping on Shabbos.

**Carrying**

As the insulin pump becomes ever more popular, many people are facing common concerns regarding its use on Shabbos. Is wearing the pump considered “carrying” according to halacha?

The insulin pump may be likened to an item of clothing, and can be carried without any shinui (i.e. in the usual manner) outdoors, even in a neighborhood without an eiruv.

The pump reservoir most often contains more insulin than one would normally use in a single day. Would this excess insulin complicate matters and possibly alter the Rav’s ruling about carrying the pump outdoors on Shabbos?

The extra insulin may be carried along with the pump, but one should not do so with the specific intention that he will use the insulin after Shabbos.

**Pump Set and Battery Changes**

Many doctors insist that the pump set be changed every two days without fail. Even those who are not particular to do so, occasionally find that they need to change their set on Shabbos. Is this allowed?

After careful evaluation of all the steps involved in a site change, my conclusion is that it poses no problem on Shabbos. Obviously, if one is aware in advance that a change will be necessary, it is preferable to assemble as much of the new set as possible before Shabbos.

May one replace the pump’s batteries on Shabbos?

This involves serious transgressions and should be avoided. If one absolutely needs to change the batteries as the equipment does no function at all, a coin may be used for the purpose of opening the battery compartment.

**advanced options**

Today’s pumps boast many new features and high-tech options that may not be necessary for its basic functions. The backlight is particularly convenient and often comes to use at a dimly lit shalosh seudos table. Is one permitted to employ this light on Shabbos?

The light should not be used.

Is either the beep or the vibrate option more preferred on Shabbos? Similarly, should one lower the volume of the beep before Shabbos?

There would be no difference among these alternatives, nor is it necessary to change the beep volume.

Can the audio bolus be used, even though it causes the pump to beep?

Yes, it’s no problem.

There are pumps that continually display the time on the main screen (which can be viewed without pressing any buttons). May one pick up the pump for the express purpose of viewing the time?

Yes.

Doctors recommend using the combination/dual wave bolus option for long meals such as the Shabbos seudah. Since a standard bolus would be sufficient, may one use the advanced bolus option which requires the pressing of additional buttons?

One can opt for the better choice, even though it would result in additional button presses.

Some pump models come with a remote control, which causes the pump to beep with each button press. It also requires one additional button push. May the remote control be used on Shabbos?

The remote may be used, as long as it does not cause any additional lights. However, it is not permissible to carry the remote outdoors on Shabbos, even with a shinui.

Newer pumps offer “wizards” to help the user calculate precisely how much insulin to administer, based current blood sugar levels and the exact amount of carbohydrates to be eaten. They also provide electronic food databases in which the user can find the carb contents of many foods. Is one permitted to make use of these advanced options, which require many additional presses, on Shabbos?

We live in a digital generation, and diabetes control should not be left behind. One can use all these pump functions just as one would throughout the rest of the week. The electronic food database may be used in case one does not have access to a handbook.

Current “Continuous Glucose Monitors” are not approved to replace finger prick testing; therefore they should not be worn over Shabbos. In case one is interested in monitoring blood glucose values specifically over the weekend, a Rav should be consulted.
Although initially approved as a 24-hour insulin to be administered at bedtime, many people have found that Lantus works better for them if taken in the morning, or even twice a day. Here are some practical suggestions for handling a fast on the various regimens:

- If you are taking your long-acting insulin as a single dose at night, you will need to decrease it as prescribed by your doctor. Commonly, the dose will be reduced by a third (although the reduction can vary significantly). If you normally take 24 units of insulin, for example, you might inject only 18 units. Note that by doing so, you will be receiving less insulin overnight as well, a correction dose of short-acting insulin might be necessary in the morning. Resume taking your regular dose following the fast.

- If you evenly split your long-acting insulin into a morning and evening dose, you will probably need to reduce only the morning dose. You may need to cut back a third, half, or even two-thirds of your usual insulin amount. If this is your first attempt at fasting, play it safe and eliminate two-thirds of your normal dosage. You can always correct using short-acting insulin if your blood sugars rise above acceptable levels.

- It is trickiest if you take your long-acting insulin as a single morning dose. Here’s one idea: Take your regular dose on Erev Yom Kippur. On the morning of the fast, take one-third of your normal dose, and compensate by taking an additional third of your long-acting insulin dose after the fast (you will be splitting your dose, although you don’t normally do so.) Beware that, even if you implement this plan, it may still take several days for blood sugar to return to normal.

If your dose is unevenly split, you may need to reduce both dosages by different amounts.

- Due to the depletion of glycogen, the body’s stored glucose insulin needs may drop significantly throughout a fast day. A pumper might reduce his normal basal rate by 20% starting early morning, 30% over the next few hours, 40% at noon time, and even 50% by late afternoon.