Glucagon FAQ's

What is Glucagon?
Glucagon is an injected medicine that causes the release of glucose from the liver where it is stored. It is a safe emergency treatment that is used when the blood sugar is so low that a person may pass out or have a seizure.

Who should use Glucagon?
If you take insulin for your diabetes, you need to be prepared for the possibility of severe hypoglycemia. If you keep your blood sugar in tight control with multiple daily doses of insulin, are on an insulin pump, or have difficulty feeling the typical symptoms of a low blood sugar, you are more likely to have a very low blood sugar.

When should Glucagon be used?
Make sure that your family and/or friends are trained on how to seek medical assistance and inject Glucagon in the case that you become disoriented and are not able to take anything by mouth, become unconscious, or have a seizure. A prescription is needed for a Glucagon emergency kit. It is important to have someone practice giving a shot before an emergency occurs.

What is in the Glucagon Kit?
The kit contains all of the supplies you will need. Your diabetes educator can show you and your family how to use glucagon correctly. The kit contains one vial of powdered glucagon and one syringe containing sterile water for mixing. The kit may be stored up to 24 months at room temperature and should not be used after the expiration date on the vial.

How is glucagon administered?
Administering glucagon is a multi-step process which involves a vial of glucagon powder and a syringe prefilled with saline.

1. Remove the cap from the vial with white powder
2. Remove the syringe needle cover
3. Push all of the fluid through the rubber stopper into the vial containing white powder
4. Leave syringe needle in the vial
5. Shake the vial to mix powder and water until dissolved
6. With the needle still in the vial, tip bottle upside down
7. Draw up all of the solution into the syringe

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8. Remove syringe needle from the vial

9. Pinch the person's skin and inject into any site that you might inject insulin (i.e. outer mid-thigh, upper arm muscle) – there is no danger of an overdose

10. Release the skin and count to five

11. Remove syringe needle from the skin

12. Turn patient onto their side in case of nausea or vomiting (a common side effect)

13. Blood sugar levels usually increase within 10-15 minutes. If no increase after 15 minutes, a second injection may be necessary

14. As soon as the patient is awake and able to swallow, give them 4 oz. fruit juice or 6 oz. regular soda, and follow with a snack containing carbohydrate and protein such as crackers and peanut butter or cheese

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