Intermediate-acting insulin

Intermediate-acting insulins (isophane insulin p. 494) have an intermediate duration of action, designed to mimic the effect of endogenous basal insulin. When given by subcutaneous injection, they have an onset of action of approximately 1–2 hours, a maximal effect at 3–12 hours, and a duration of action of 11–24 hours.

Isophane insulin is a suspension of insulin with protamine; it may be given as one or more daily injections alongside separate meal-time short-acting insulin injections, or mixed with a short-acting (soluble or rapid-acting) insulin in the same syringe—for recommended insulin regimens see Type 1 diabetes p. 482 and Type 2 diabetes below. Isophane insulin may be mixed with a short-acting insulin by the patient, or a pre-mixed biphasic insulin can be supplied (biphasic isophane insulin p. 494, biphasic insulin aspart p. 495 and biphasic insulin lispro p. 495).

Biphasic insulins (biphasic isophane insulin, biphasic insulin aspart, biphasic insulin lispro) are pre-mixed insulin preparations containing various combinations of short-acting insulin (soluble insulin or rapid-acting analogue insulin) and an intermediate-acting insulin.

The percentage of short-acting insulin varies from 15% to 50%. These preparations should be administered by subcutaneous injection immediately before a meal.

Long-acting insulin

Like intermediate-acting insulins, the long-acting insulins (protamine zinc insulin, insulin zinc suspension, insulin detemir p. 496, insulin glargine p. 496, insulin degludec p. 495) mimic endogenous basal insulin secretion, but their duration of action may last up to 36 hours. They achieve a steady-state level after 2–4 days to produce a constant level of insulin.

Insulin glargine and insulin degludec are given once daily and insulin detemir is given once or twice daily according to individual requirements. The older long-acting insulins, (insulin zinc suspension and protamine zinc insulin) are now rarely prescribed.

Type 2 diabetes

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Description of condition

Type 2 diabetes is a chronic metabolic condition characterised by insulin resistance. Insufficient pancreatic insulin production also occurs progressively over time, resulting in hyperglycaemia.

Type 2 diabetes in children is associated with increased body-weight, increased risk of renal complications, hypertension, and dyslipidaemia; therefore it increases cardiovascular risk. It is associated with long-term microvascular and macrovascular complications, together with reduced quality of life and life expectancy.

Type 2 diabetes typically develops later in life but is increasingly diagnosed in children, despite previously being considered a disease of adulthood.

Aims of treatment

Treatment is aimed at minimising the risk of long-term microvascular and macrovascular complications by effective blood-glucose control and maintenance of HbA1c at or below the target value set for each individual child.

Overview

EvGr Lifestyle modifications (including weight loss, smoking cessation and regular exercise) can help to reduce both hyperglycaemia and cardiovascular risk and should be encouraged where appropriate. Children and their carers should also receive advice from a paediatric dietitian to help optimise body-weight and blood-glucose control.

Lifestyle modifications alone are often unsuccessful at achieving glycaemic control in children, therefore antidiabetic drugs should be offered and initiated alongside lifestyle interventions such as diet and exercise, from the time of diagnosis.

Children with type 2 diabetes should receive immunisation against influenza (over the age of 6 months) and pneumococcal infection—see Influenza vaccine p. 835 and Pneumococcal vaccine p. 838. A

Antidiabetic drugs

In children, type 2 diabetes does not usually occur until adolescence and information on the use of oral antidiabetic drugs in children is limited. For recommended treatment regimens and the place in therapy of each drug, see *Treatment of type 2 diabetes*.

EvGr Treatment with antidiabetic drugs should be initiated under specialist supervision **only**. E

Metformin hydrochloride p. 488 is the only oral antidiabetic drug licensed for use in children. It has an anti-hyperglycaemic effect, lowering both basal and postprandial blood-glucose concentrations. Metformin hydrochloride does not stimulate insulin secretion and therefore, when given alone, does not cause hypoglycaemia.

EvGr The dose of standard-release metformin hydrochloride should be increased gradually to minimise the risk of gastro-intestinal side-effects. A

There is little experience of the use of other non-insulin antidiabetic drugs in children, with most evidence extrapolated from adult studies.

Several **sulfonylureas** (such as gliclazide p. 490, glibenclamide p. 489 and tolbutamide p. 490) are available but experience in children is limited; they are not the recommended choice of treatment in children; therefore treatment should be initiated by a specialist. The sulfonylureas may cause hypoglycaemia which may be more common in children than in adults. Hypoglycaemia is more likely with long-acting sulfonylureas such as glibenclamide, which has been associated with severe, prolonged and sometimes fatal cases—for this reason sulfonylureas are usually avoided in children.

Treatment of type 2 diabetes

EvGr A target HbA1c concentration of 48 mmol/mol (6.5%) or lower is ideal to minimise the risk of long-term complications, however an individualised lowest achievable target should be agreed with each child and their carers taking into account factors such as daily activities, individual life goals, complications, and comorbidities. HbA1c concentrations should be monitored every 3 months.

Note: Consider relaxing the target HbA1c level on a case-by-case basis, with particular consideration for children where tight blood-glucose control is not appropriate or poses a high risk of the consequences of hypoglycaemia.

Standard-release metformin hydrochloride is the first-line choice for initial treatment in children and should be offered from diagnosis, alongside nutrition and lifestyle advice.

If the combination of lifestyle changes and metformin hydrochloride fails to reduce HbA1c to the agreed target within 3 to 4 months of therapy, addition of a long-acting insulin or once-daily human isophane insulin p. 494 should be considered (see also, Insulin p. 484). A

EvGr Initiation of insulin should be under specialist care. E

EvGr Metformin hydrochloride should be continued alongside insulin, to improve insulin sensitivity. The combination of metformin hydrochloride and once-daily insulin is usually an effective treatment for maintaining glycaemic control in the majority of children for extended periods of time.

If the combination of basal insulin and metformin does not achieve the HbA1c target (and postprandial hyperglycaemia