

Lancing for glucose monitoring: the conversation

As a health professional, discussing lancet use is a key part of any conversation with a person with diabetes who is monitoring their blood glucose. It may be how often to use one, where to purchase more lancets or even how to dispose of them.

When reviewing how a person with diabetes is monitoring their glucose, often it's more about their blood glucose levels than their skill in using the

equipment. Make time during their visit to check their monitoring equipment, how they are using it and whether they need an upgrade to a newer monitor. Make sure they are using in-date monitoring strips and know where to get them. It is well accepted that people with diabetes who know how to use their monitoring equipment accurately are less likely to stop monitoring.

Here are some conversation starters about lancets



LANCET USE

- How often do you change your lancet?
- Do you know how often to change your lancet?



CARE OF SITES

- Let's have a look at your fingertips, what shape are they in?
- Do you use a different fingertip each time?



DISPOSAL

- How are you disposing your used lancets?
- Do you know what type of sharps container to use?

CHALLENGES AROUND THE FREQUENCY OF LANCET USE

One of the main challenges is the frequency of use of a lancet by the person. Research at this stage is primarily focused on single-use when lancing different people^{1, 3, 4}.

The origins of lancets came about long before glucose meters. They were used in hospitals and pathology departments to obtain a blood drop for a variety of

reasons. Enterprising health professionals saw the value of adopting these when glucose meters became available in the 1970's.

The challenge comes when you ask a person how often they use a lancet on themselves and what they were first told by their health professional. Many people admit to re-using a lancet many times without



any harmful effect². But does that make it ok? In a recent survey of 241 people, 65% admitted to only changing their lancet after five uses. For the group with type 1 diabetes, 84% only change their lancets after 12 or more uses, commenting this may be weekly, bi-weekly, monthly or never for some.

When diabetes educators were asked in the same survey, the answers were mixed. Only around 40% of diabetes educators believed the lancet should be changed after a single use.



SO, WHAT IS THE MESSAGE WE SHOULD BE GIVING AROUND FREQUENCY OF LANCET USE?

Simply stated, a lancet is designed to be for single-use and disposed of in a safe way. The main reasons are to reduce the risk of infection, or lessen the pain from using a blunt lancet. There is little evidence to suggest repeated use increases the risk of infection especially if clean hands are used, however, that is not the case for reusing a blunt lancet. Evidence suggests that using a blunt lancet increases the risk of pain, scarring or even callous build up at the lancing site. Using these sites may become less effective in drawing a blood drop and may result in the person struggling to monitor their glucose level or even stopping altogether. It may affect how they manage their diabetes and their emotional health and wellbeing.

Having a conversation about monitoring that includes lancet use is an opportunity to ensure the person is monitoring their glucose level as easily and pain-free as possible and using up-to-date equipment. A monitor that uses the CONTOUR[®]NEXT Strips for example has Second-Chance[®] Sampling, which allows the person to add more blood for up to 1 minute. For the person claiming difficulty in getting a sample, this can help, along with changing their lancet more frequently.

There are some great tips for getting a sufficient drop of blood you can share, such as; warming the hands, massaging the fingertips or even having the hand lower than the heart. There are many ways to support the people you see with diabetes who are monitoring their blood glucose levels. One of the ways you can support them is by having a conversation about lancet use.

Until there is more evidence, the solution is to talk to the people you see about their lancet usage and decide together on a strategy that best-suits them.

References:

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4. General and Plastic Surgery Devices; Reclassification of Blood Lancets: <http://bit.ly/FDA-MultiUseLancet>
5. How often should I use a fresh lancet – community thread Diabetes UK: <https://www.diabetes.co.uk/forum/threads/how-often-should-i-use-a-fresh-lancet.126395/>
6. Changing Lancets for Diabetes Fingerstick Checks: <https://www.healthline.com/diabetesmine/changing-lancets>
7. The Great Lancet Debate: <https://integrateddiabetes.com/Articles/gen/lancing%20for%20diabetes%20health.pdf>
8. Infection Prevention during Blood Glucose Monitoring and Insulin Administration: <https://www.cdc.gov/injectionsafety/blood-glucose-monitoring.html>
9. Lancing and Lancets, Diabetes UK: <https://www.diabetes.co.uk/insulin/Diabetes-lancets-and-lancing.html>