OSCE checklist for insulin administration

An OSCE checklist for insulin administration starts with checking the prescription and the blood glucose, then drawing up or dialling the dose, giving it into a rotated site and recording it. Insulin is a high-risk drug, so say your checks aloud.

OSCE checklist for insulin administration: steps to practise

1. Wash or rub your hands. Check the prescription: patient, insulin name and type, dose in units written in full, time and signature.
2. Introduce yourself, confirm identity and explain. Ask when the patient last ate or plans to eat.
3. Check the blood glucose and compare it with the plan. Say what you would do if it is low.
4. Check the insulin vial or pen: name, expiry, appearance, and how it has been stored.
5. Do a second check if your policy requires one, and say who does it.
6. Pen: attach a new needle, prime it, and dial the dose. Syringe: use an insulin syringe and draw up the dose in units.
7. Clean your hands again, and choose a site away from lumps and scars, and not the same place as last time.
8. Inject as taught, hold for the time your policy states, then remove the needle.
9. Put the needle straight into the sharps bin.
10. Record the dose, type, time and site, and arrange the meal and next glucose check.
11. Teach the patient what to do if they feel shaky or sweaty.

What candidates commonly forget

- Writing and saying units in full, never as an abbreviation.
- Checking blood glucose before giving the dose.
- Priming the pen.
- Rotating sites and checking for lumps.
- Linking the dose to food and giving hypoglycaemia advice.

Local policy comes first

This is our own practice checklist. Your college, hospital or country may do some steps differently. Where local policy and this list disagree, follow local policy. Insulin devices, checks and glucose targets vary by country and by hospital, so learn your local protocol. You can practise with an AI patient, and try one station free with no sign-up. See also the general OSCE nursing checklist.

Common questions

Do I check blood glucose before insulin?

Usually yes, and your plan will say what to do with the result. Follow your policy.

Why write units in full?

Abbreviations have been misread and have led to errors, so write the full word.

Where do I inject insulin?

Use the sites your course teaches and rotate them. Check the old sites for lumps.

Sources

- NICE NG17: Type 1 diabetes in adults
- NICE NG28: Type 2 diabetes in adults
- NHS: Insulin

Checked 2026-11-13. Fees and rules change, so confirm them with the regulator before you book.