



# Now is the time of Insulin



## Answers to the most frequent questions about insulin

Type 2 Diabetes

The  
Reason

Why  
Now

Life  
Style

Insulin  
&  
Weight

Hypo  
glyce  
mias

State  
of  
Mind

Future



# Why do you need insulin ?

**You need to know that even before your diabetes was diagnosed, the insulin secretion in your pancreas was starting to fail and deteriorate.**

**This deterioration** continues despite the efforts made by you and your medical team, who are to help you stay healthy, since the way of stopping this process has not yet been discovered.

**This is starting to be explained in diabetes education** from the very first moment that diabetes is diagnosed.

So the patient understands and accepts insulin better and can decide more easily to change to insulin. He will accept insulin treatment just like a different stage in the treatment of diabetes and not, as it is frequently regarded, as a 'sort of' punishment" for not having followed perfectly all the medical advice received during the treatment.

The  
Reason

Why  
Now

Life  
Style

Insulin  
&  
Weight

Hypo  
glyce  
mias

State  
of  
Mind

Future

## What is insulin?

**Insulin is a hormone** produced by our pancreas that helps the glucose to get into the cells, but it cannot be administered by mouth, since it would be destroyed in the stomach.

**Since its discovery** by Banting and Best in 1921, not only has it saved many lives in patients with diabetes type 1, but also it has helped to increase the quality of life of many others with type 2 diabetes like you.

**There is a widespread belief** that the type 2 diabetes when treated with tablets is a minor disease and that it becomes a major disease only when insulin is needed as part of the treatment. This is not true at all, diabetes is a potentially serious disease from its very beginning.

**Please remember that you are a normal human being**, though one with a pancreatic disease, so it is not reasonable to see the change of treatment to insulin as a personal or medical failure. If we were to look for something or someone to blame, that something could only be the pancreas itself.

**Occasionally you may be achieving acceptable glycaemic values** before breakfast but your doctor may ask you to take insulin with meals because your values after meals are very high, and this has also been related to atherogenesis and some diabetic complications.

1  
The Reason

2  
Why Now

3  
Life Style


4  
Insulin & Weight

5  
Hypo glycemias

6  
State of Mind

7  
Future





Why do I need it  
right now when  
I am feeling  
very well ?

**M**any studies have shown that not controlling high levels of blood glucose (with glycosylated haemoglobins above 7%) is associated with a very high risk of suffering all sorts of serious diabetic complications.

**The European Consensus for Diabetes** established in 1999 that a more intensive treatment should be recommended when the HbA1c reaches a level of 7.5%. You need to know that any decrease in HbA1c that you can achieve will produce a decrease in the risk of complications.

**Thus, if your diabetes control worsens** and your level of HbA1c is over the 'security level' your doctor may propose you to change your treatment. Usually this would be a change from tablets to insulin or a combination of both, since you deserve the best possible treatment in order to avoid or delay late complications. It has been proven that insulin is the agent which lowers the HbA1c the most.

Why  
Now

Life  
Style

Insulin  
&  
Weight

Hypo  
glyce  
mias

State  
of  
Mind

Future



**Clearly the use of insulin** in many people's view is associated with the most serious complications of diabetes, because everybody might remember somebody who changed to insulin treatment and suffered some of the most serious diabetic complications like blindness or amputations etc. But actually this does not result from taking insulin, since the main reason why these people suffered such complications was NOT USING INSULIN ON TIME.

**Occasionally some doctors,** directed by a sort of compassion for the patient, have used to collaborate in the delay of the start of insulin treatment that was observed so frequently in the past. As this would really bring about more suffering for the patients and their family, doctors have done it less and less over time.

**In the beginning your diabetes tablets** may still help you, using insulin as a complementary treatment generally at night, but in many other cases the lack of insulin is so pronounced that insulin treatment only is needed.

Why  
Now

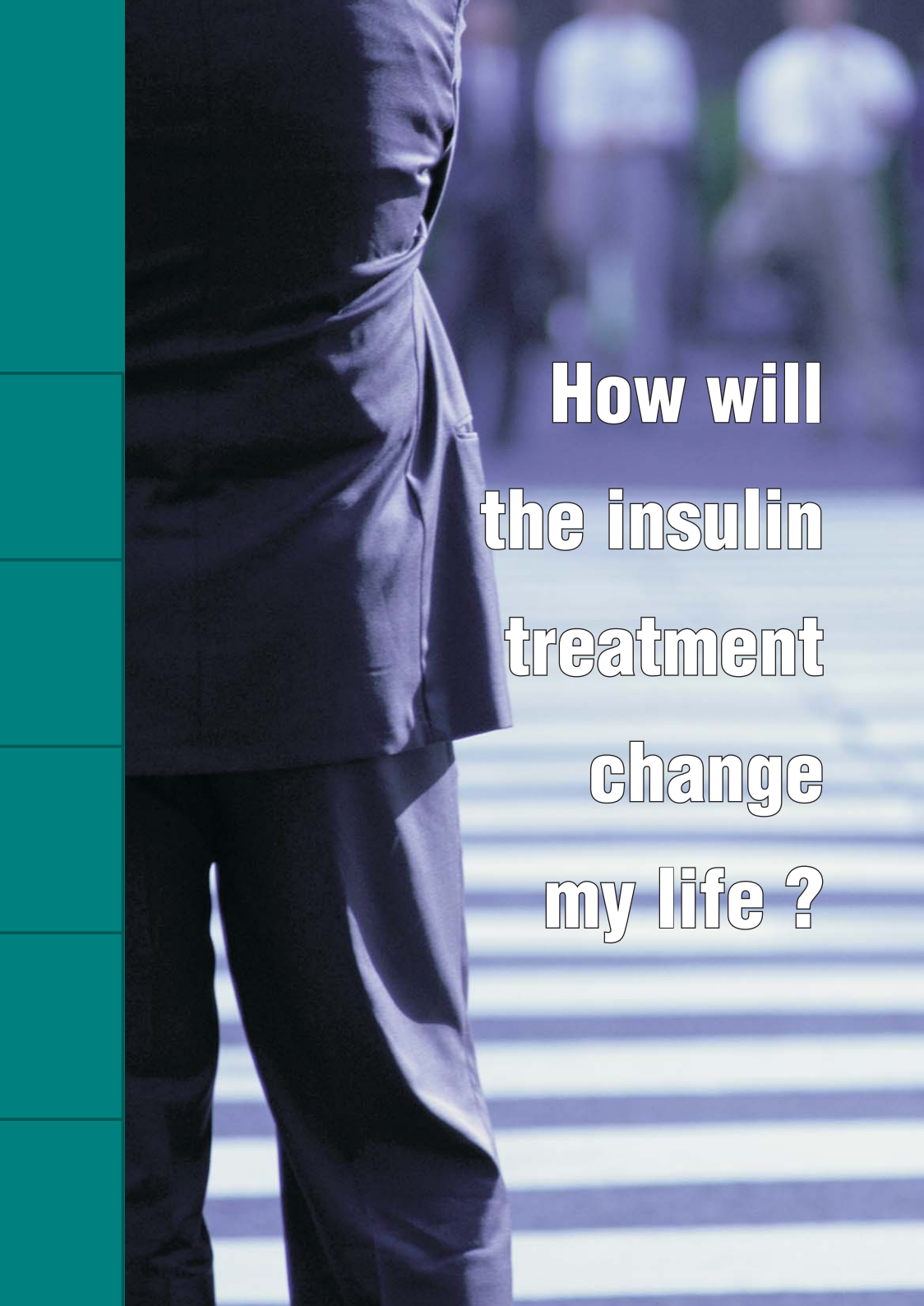
Life  
Style

Insulin  
&  
Weight

Hypo  
glyce  
mias

State  
of  
Mind

Future



# How will the insulin treatment change my life ?

**I**t should not change too much.

**Ask your medical team** how to adjust the insulin treatment to your habits and lifestyle so that it suits your personal features as much as possible. Today there are many different types of insulin: a 'custom-made' insulin therapy can be designed just for you. You will be able to adapt better to the kind of treatment that you need now in order to preserve your health while maintaining your lifestyle.

**In addition to this, insulin,** by achieving a better diabetes control will make you feel better, more energetic and optimistic; this will influence your quality of life in a positive way, and you will soon forget the great distress that you experienced when you first started the insulin treatment.

**New user-friendly systems of insulin administration** like syringes with thinner and shorter needles, and insulin pens will make it simpler and more convenient.

Life  
Style

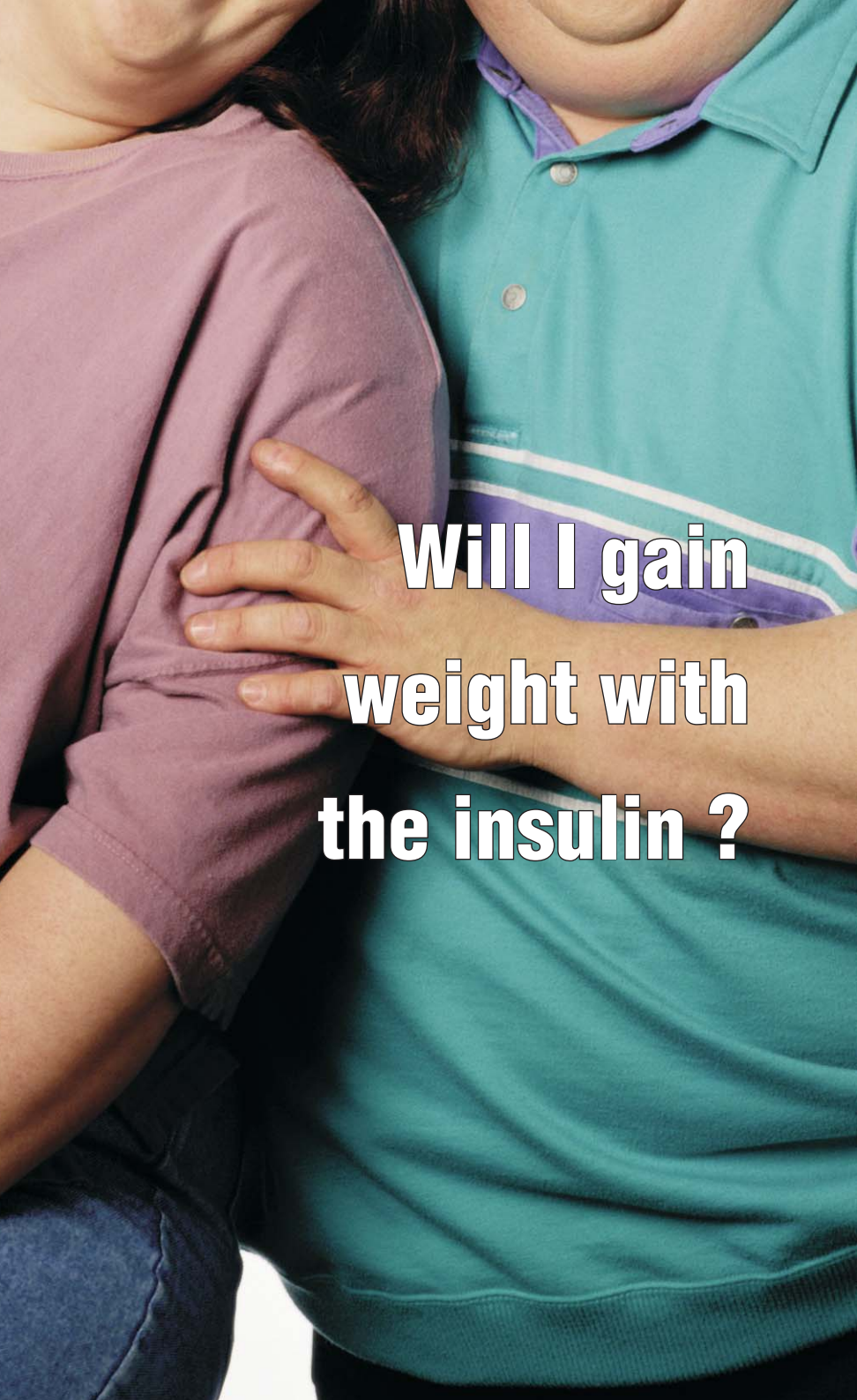
Insulin  
&  
Weight

Hypo  
glyce  
mias

State  
of  
Mind

Future





## Will I gain weight with the insulin ?

**This is a widespread fear, since it happens often. BUT WEIGHT GAIN IS AVOIDABLE.**

**Amongst other reasons,** one of the reasons why you may put on weight is that the lack of insulin was producing a great loss of calories because too much glucose was being eliminated through urine. This will not happen when the sugar levels in our blood are in a normal range. Besides, insulin is a hormone that stores energy.

**Fortunately,** this increase in weight is usually moderate especially when your medical team helps you providing you with some modifications in your diet and your physical exercise.

4  
Insulin  
&  
Weight

5  
Hypo  
glyce  
mias

6  
State  
of  
Mind

7  
Future



# Will I have more hypoglycemic episodes ?

**It is true that the risk of suffering a hypoglycemia is greater in people who are taking insulin than in those who are taking tablets, but it is also true that these are rarely serious in a patient who has type 2 diabetes like you.**

**Even mild hypoglycemias** (those you can treat yourself) are annoying and they may interrupt your everyday activity, occasionally causing feelings of shame, and also producing worry in the people around you.

**The risk can be minimized** if you follow the precautions given by your medical team before starting the insulin treatment, paying attention to what you were taught about how to make the right insulin doses adjustments.

**It is also very important** that you inform the people who live with you about what the hypoglycemic symptoms are and how they must be treated.





# Is it normal to feel rather depressed with the news ?

## **A** normal feeling when you first hear the news

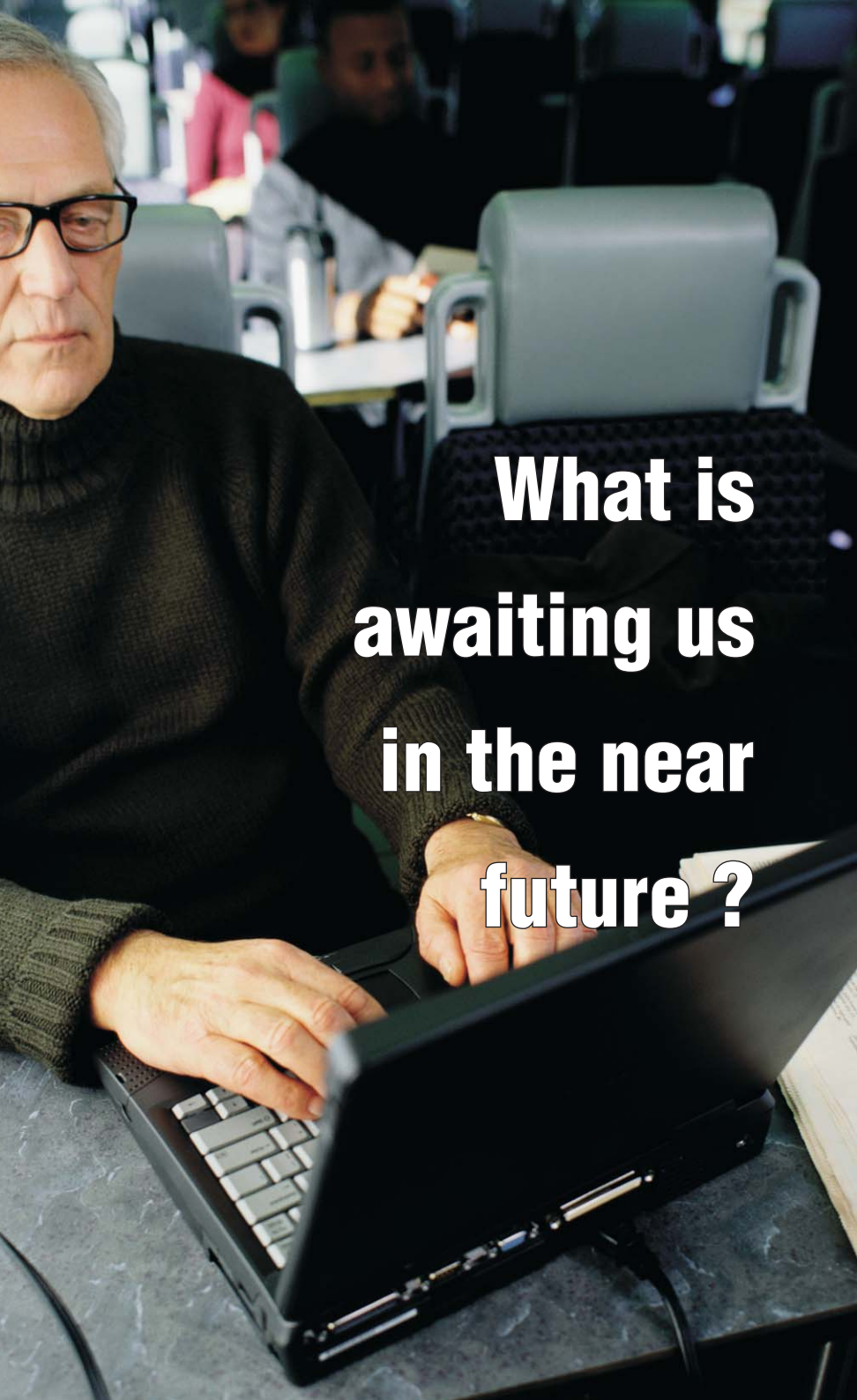
**Especially when you have not been told** after being diagnosed that insulin will be finally required by almost all the patients with diabetes. Actually we clearly explain to all the patients that diabetes is progressive and to keep it under control at every stage, you will need different treatments including insulin.

**Initially you might feel** as having lost something or that is taken away from you, it is like a mourning in which you bury a part of your pancreas and need to take some time to accept this fact, since it also implies physical annoyance such as that caused by injections. You also fear losing your freedom because of depending on insulin, although in reality it is the same dependence that you had before with your diabetes tablets.

**Many people with diabetes** are initially reluctant to inject themselves, but the great majority learn how to get over that fear soon, and then the daily injections become a routine.

**Although it is difficult** to avoid the negative emotional impact produced by the change to insulin, sharing and exchanging experiences with other people who have gone through your same situation will doubtlessly help you; they understand more than anyone else and can answer many of your doubts and uncertainties.

**Congratulations,** in life it is hard to take the right decision in order to maintain your health. You have just done it if you have already decided to accept insulin as your treatment.



# What is awaiting us in the near future ?

**U**ntil a way of stopping the progressive deterioration of the pancreatic insulin producing cells that happens in diabetes is found, researchers are trying to find simpler and safer alternatives of administrating insulin.

**Nowadays**, clinical studies with inhaled insulin are currently very advanced. This insulin has proven effective, although its efficiency and safety in the long term is still being scrutinized. Research about transdermal insulin (insulin patches) and oral insulin are not as advanced.

**Once an alternative way of administering insulin** is found, the patients themselves will want to start insulin treatment earlier than they usually do now. In addition, their health teams will offer it to the patient much earlier and without going through what is nowadays a difficult moment also for the medical team. Generally it is not true that your medical team is insensitive and that they do not understand what that decision means for you.

**With an early start of insulin treatment** your quality of life will improve now and in the future by helping you to avoid the much-feared long-term diabetic complications.

Dedicated to  
my FRIEND  
Bob Anderson

Assisi, January 2005

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read "Richard", with a long, sweeping underline that extends across the bottom right of the page.