

Usually, an insulin prescription calls for a certain number of units of insulin to be administered at certain times of the day. However, some insulin prescriptions call for extra units of insulin to be administered when a person's blood sugar gets high.

This type of prescription is called a **SLIDING SCALE** because the amount of insulin to be administered changes or “slides” up or down based on the person's blood sugar.

For some people, sliding scale insulin adds extra insulin to their usual insulin dose. For other people, sliding scale insulin may be the only insulin they use.

Healthcare providers individualize sliding scales to their patients, so each one is different. However, they all work in basically the same way.



Your delegating RN can:

- Use Mr. X's sliding scale prescription and orders on the next page as an example to teach you about sliding scales.
- Then, teach you about *your client's* sliding scale and how to use it correctly and safely.



MD Order for Mr. X



Monitor blood sugar 2x/day—9am and 5pm

Administer Regular Insulin for blood sugar above 200 mg/dl at 9am and 5pm according to the sliding scale below:

Sliding Scale for Mr. X

Blood Sugar (mg/dl)	Regular Insulin
Below 70 = Follow Rule of 15 and notify MD	
201-250	4 units subcutaneously
251-300	6 units subcutaneously
301-350	8 units subcutaneously
Above 350	Call MD

To figure out whether Mr. X is supposed to have sliding scale insulin for a certain blood sugar, you need to look in the column on the left side of the table to find the range where Mr. X's blood sugar is included. For example, a blood sugar of 210 mg/dl is found in the 201-250 range.

Next, you need to look directly across the row to the right side of the table to see how many units of insulin to administer for that blood sugar range. In this case, 4 units of Regular insulin would be administered subcutaneously for a blood sugar of 210 mg/dl.

Let's practice with more examples. Use the sliding scale table to follow along so you are sure to understand the answers.

According to this scale, if Mr. X's blood sugar at 9am on Monday is 225 mg/dl, then Mr. X should get 4 units of Regular insulin injected subcutaneously.

If Mr. X's blood sugar at 5pm on Monday is 300 mg/dl, then he should get 6 units of Regular insulin injected subcutaneously.

On Tuesday, If Mr. X's blood sugar at 9am is 175 mg/dl, then he should get no units of sliding scale Regular insulin. Mr. X is only supposed to get sliding scale insulin for blood sugars above 200 mg/dl.