

Just like wearing a yoyo

Elizabeth OShea describes how she initially wore a yoyo instead of a pump to get used to being attached to something 24 hours a day

Introduction

Yoyo equipment



Like many people, I was apprehensive about being attached to a machine twenty-four hours a day. This anxiety was the single largest obstacle between me and pump therapy. It was the reason I didn't even look into pumps, despite knowing a number of people who achieved excellent control by using one.

Then I spent a weekend with a friend who uses a pump. I appreciated the convenience of insulin at the push of a button. During a very bad hypo, I realised the advantages of being able to turn off my insulin supply. I had to deal with the low blood sugar and the rest of the injected insulin that remained in my body. I could turn a pump off for a short period of time to deal with this excess instead. This appeals to me because I get very tired of having to eat when I don't want to. And because a pump provides a continuous background insulin supply, I wouldn't have to leave an activity or a meeting to take my long acting insulin at a specific time. I was suddenly very interested in becoming a pumper.

Wear a yoyo!

My partner had a brilliant idea a few days later: why not tape something to my belly and wear it for a few days, to see what it felt like. So we took a yoyo off the toyshelf, and for a few unconventional days it became an imaginary insulin pump.

Ring stuck to stomach



But how? We extended the yoyo to the end of its string, which was 38 inches (97 cm) – infusion set tubing varies in length from 23 – 43 inches (60 - 110 cm). I used plasters to tape the yoyo's finger ring to a place on my belly that would be recommended as an infusion site (the guidelines for infusion sites are the same as for injection sites). Voilà, I was pumping! Well, I was wearing something that would give me an idea of what a pump feels like.

I was surprised at how quickly I became accustomed to the thing on a string that was taped to my abdomen for four days. It was simply there, and I got on with life. I didn't really notice the yoyo-pump when having the euphemistic 'intimate moments' mentioned in some pump literature, although I do recall moving it out of the way in bed. The most difficult adjustment I made was to having to carry something with me when I went to the toilet in the middle of the night.

Yoyo taken from trouser pocket



Of course, a yoyo doesn't have a built in belt clip, so I had to carry it in a pocket. I challenged myself at the end of my 'pump trial' by wearing a short dress, which meant carrying my 'pump' in my bra. However, I might get a 'thigh thing' for my real pump. It's a little pouch on a garter contraption for carrying your pump on your leg. It could be useful, but first I have to decide which will scandalize people less: reaching up my dress to bolus, or fiddling in my bra. The good news was that no one in public noticed my yoyo-pump – and that was very comforting, since I didn't want to explain why I had a yoyo taped to my belly. It also made me feel that a real pump wouldn't be glaringly obvious when I was wearing it.

Conclusion

The only reason I ended my 'pump' experiment after four days was because the 'hypo-allergenic' plasters I had used gave me a rash – but I think this was because they had been in my bathroom for a very long time. The experiment certainly helped me overcome my psychological difficulties around a new appendage. After wearing my yoyo-pump for four days with no inconvenience, I was ready to take on my consultant and start pumping. It meant I had no inhibitions about hooking up when my real pump arrived. Instead of worrying about how to carry it and whether people would notice, I moved directly to learning how to press all the right buttons!

Author: Elizabeth OShea <sastacht@mail.com>. Elizabeth OShea is not a medical professional. She has Type 1 diabetes and uses an insulin pump. The information given here is based on her own personal experience. [More about Elizabeth OShea...](#)

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