

# Wearing a pump

*Diana Maynard discusses the solutions she has found for wearing her pump especially when ballroom dancing!*

For some people, like me, one of the biggest fears about being attached to the pump 24 hours a day is how to wear it. Most men don't have so much of a problem with this, as it is easy to clip the pump onto a belt or waistband, or simply place it in a pocket, and forget about it. That's all very well, but what if you're wearing a dress or a swimming costume? What if you don't want everyone to know you're wearing a pump, but you don't have a pocket?

**Diana Maynard with goalball coach, from Reading Chronicle 15 Sep 2000**



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For women, and for those involved in sports, finding ways to wear the pump can be tricky. Being a ballroom dancer, and keen on a variety of sports, I was very worried initially about how I would cope. With the help of other pump users, some ready-made pump accessories, and a bit of ingenuity, I have come up with a few solutions over the last year. I hope that my experiences will help others feel less intimidated at the thought of wearing a pump, and answer some questions. This is purely written from my own experience, and what others have suggested. Also, it is written from the point of a view of a [Minimed](#) pump user. The [Disetronic](#) pump differs slightly in design, in that there is no integral clip (although there are cases available with a clip), but the size and shape of both pumps are comparable. The important thing to remember is that different things may work for different people – this is intended solely to give you some ideas about what is possible.

Let's start with the simple day-to-day occasions. With jeans or trousers, I use the leather case available from Minimed, and use the clip to attach it to my belt or waistband. Most people think it's a pager. Sometimes people ask me what it is. Depending on what I feel like telling them, I either explain that it's an insulin pump, tell them it's a pager, or if I'm feeling frivolous, a device for contacting aliens.

## Di Maynard ballroom dancing



With a skirt or when I'm looking formal, I don't like to wear it on my waistband since it destroys the line of

the clothes, or looks very noticeable. In that situation, I usually wear it in my bra. At first I couldn't understand how other people did this successfully, but there are tricks to it. You need to take off the clip and case, and place it horizontally in the very centre of your bra. It works best with either a sports bra, or a bra without underwires (the "crossover" type works very well). I can wear this even with a very tight top and it is completely invisible, unless the top is very low-cut, in which case sometimes it can be seen by someone taller than you looking down (but if they're going to be looking down your top, then that's their problem). I also wear the pump this way with a dress, when I'm dancing, and when I'm doing any kind of sport. It tends to be a lot more secure there than on a waistband. People worry that the insulin might get a bit hot there, being so close to the skin, but I've never had any problem with that. The only difficult bit is what happens when you want to bolus. At first I felt very self conscious trying to take it out of my bra in public, but I soon began to realise that most of the time, no one even notices, and if they do, they're usually too polite to say anything. I usually either reach up inside my top and pull the pump out, or, if that's awkward (e.g. if I'm wearing a dress) I reach down from the top. I have successfully done this at a formal dinner sitting next to a vicar, who didn't notice anything amiss, and I often do likewise on the bus or train, sitting next to someone. Of course, if you have the new Minimed 508 pump, it's even easier since it comes with a remote control for just such occasions. If you're worried about something hard pressing against you, then you could try the soft pouch which clips to the bra instead.

A similar method is to wear it in the side of your bra, under the arm – again horizontally. While this does make a bit of a bulge, and feels a bit strange until you get used to it, it is generally quite secure. I wear it like that with a strapless bra, with a bra where it doesn't fit in the centre, or for dancing when I will be upside down (it tends to fall out of the centre in this situation). You need a bra with a reasonably wide strap for this though. If your top is very tight, it may be a bit more noticeable.

Another method that can work is to wear it in the top of your tights, on your hip. I have worn my pump there sometimes for dancing, and if your skirt is tight, it stays put. You can also buy various devices for wearing your pump. Minimed stock quite a wide range of accessories. Personally I don't like most of them, but the "Leg Thing" is quite good. It's a kind of pouch for the pump, with a velcro strap that goes round your calf or thigh. The problem many people have with this is that it tends to fall down. I tried the "Thigh Thing" which did exactly that, although I believe the design has since been improved. I've worn the Leg Thing very successfully round my calf with a long dress at a ball, and it stood up to the rigours of jiving very well. It is meant for the calf, but if you have reasonably small thighs it will fit round your thigh too (though I found it was more likely to fall down round my thigh).

There are various other pump accessories available, which I haven't personally tried. I can't imagine most of them being much good if you want to disguise the pump under tight-fitting clothes. There's a waist thing which is like the leg thing but goes round your waist under your clothes, and a bra pouch which attaches to the front of your bra and hangs down under your clothes. However, some people obviously find them useful.

If you're inventive and good at sewing, you can make your own accessories. Some people stitch pockets onto the inside of dresses. I've always thought that would spoil the line, again, but I've never tried it. Some people even stitch pockets onto the inside of leotards and swimming costumes, using pieces of Lycra. For a swimming costume, when I'm not actually in the water, I just use the clip to attach it to the underneath of the swimming costume, on the hip (so the clip is on the outside and the pump on the inside). This protects it a little from the elements, and looks less odd. It does of course look a bit strange, but I've given up worrying too much about that. If they ask, you can explain, and if they don't, then you don't have to worry. But I figure that the type of people who will see you in a swimming costume are likely to be the sort of people to whom you can explain about the pump, if they don't already know.

The other question many people have is what to do with the pump at night. There are various options open to you, and it really doesn't seem to be a problem for most people, once they find a solution that works for them. If you wear pyjamas, you can put it in the pyjama pocket (or sew one in if you haven't got a pocket) or clip it onto the waistband. If you don't wear anything suitable for attaching the pump to, you can either place it under your pillow, or just place it in the bed beside you. Or you can even wear one of the accessories previously mentioned, such as the waist or leg thing. People often worry that it will fall out of bed, or the set will fall out, but in practice, even if you move around in your sleep, this doesn't tend to happen. I initially tried putting it under the pillow, but found I tended to strangle myself with the tubing when I turned over, and that it was uncomfortable to have the pump under my head. So now I just place it beside me in bed. Occasionally it falls out of bed, or ends up in an odd place, but it's always perfectly all right. I use the longer length tubing, which means that if it does hit the floor, it just lies there quite happily until morning, without pulling on me. The pump can't go anywhere, since it's attached to you, so

it's pretty safe whatever you decide to do with it.

Of course, it would be wonderful if we all came equipped with pump-shaped holes in our hips, and a sticky Velcro bit on our skin to hold them there, but we don't. Sometimes you can hide a pump, sometimes you can't, but I'd rather be lumpy than pumless!

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Pump accessories can be bought on-line at the following sites:

- [www.uniaccs.com](http://www.uniaccs.com)
- [www.diabetesnet.com](http://www.diabetesnet.com)

or by contacting:

- [Disetronic](#) (tel: 02476 531 338); or
- [Medtronic MiniMed UK](#) (tel: 01293 212213).

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