

# Starting Insulin – a patient guide

## ABOUT INSULIN

Your body needs insulin to help the energy from the food you eat get into your cells.

You may take the same amount of insulin every day, or it may change.

You need to test and write down your blood sugar results every day, using the blood sugar testing machine called a glucometer. This will help your healthcare provider know how much insulin you need.

There are many different kinds of insulin. Some last a long time, others work fast and do not last very long.

This chart tells you about insulin, when it starts working, when it is the strongest (“peaks”) and how long it lasts. It also tells you if it looks clear or cloudy.

Type of Insulin	Starts working within...	Peaks in...	Lasts...	Clear or Cloudy
Rapid-acting (lispro, aspart, and glulisine)	5 minutes	About 1 hour	2–4 hours	Clear
Regular/short-acting	30 minutes	2–3 hours	3–6 hours	Clear
Intermediate-acting NPH	2–4 hours	4–12 hours	12–18 hours	Cloudy
Long-acting				
Human ultralente	6–10 hours	—	20–24 hours	Cloudy
Insulin analogues (glargine and detemir)	2–4 hours	—	24 hours	Cloudy

Place label here.

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You may need to mix different types insulin yourself. Some types of insulin come in pre-mixed bottles. Your healthcare provider will help you choose.

### Mixing Insulin

- The clear insulin needs to go in the syringe before the cloudy insulin.
- The cloudy insulin needs to be mixed gently in your hands before using.
- Do not shake the bottle.
- Check to make sure you are always using the right insulin.



### Storing Insulin

- An opened bottle of insulin can be kept at room temperature.
- If it will not be used up in 30 days, store in the refrigerator.
- If it is at room temperature for more than 30 days, throw it away.
- Do not store insulin in the freezer.
- Do not store insulin in your car or on a windowsill.
- If the insulin is supposed to be clear and it is cloudy or has lumps in it, throw it away.
- Always have an extra bottle of insulin on hand.
- Do **not** share insulin with others.

**Ask your healthcare provider if you have questions about insulin.**