There are many types of insulin. They fall into three main categories: rapid -acting insulin, intermediate- acting insulin and long-acting insulin.

Rapid-Acting Insulin

Rapid-acting insulin works quickly to lower the blood glucose. It should be given no earlier than 20 minutes before a meal. It may be given by itself or in combination with an intermediate or long acting insulin.

Names

- Admelog
- Apidra
- Afrezza (inhaled)
- Fiasp
- Humalog
- Novolog

Timing/Delivery

- Begins working: 10-15 minutes
- Peak (works the hardest): 1-2 hours
- Done working: 3-4 hours
- Can be given by: syringe or pen

Intermediate -Acting Insulin

Intermediate-acting works more slowly than rapid-acting insulin. It is cloudy and must be rolled several times before using it. It may be combined with a rapid-acting insulin.

Names

- Humulin NPH
- Novolin NPH

Timing/Delivery

- Begins working: 1- 1 1⁄2 hours

- Peak (works the hardest): 6-8 hours
- Done working: 8-16 hours
- Can be given by: syringe or pen

Long-Acting Insulin

Long-acting insulin works up to 24 hours as a background or “basal” insulin. It cannot be mixed with any other insulins.

Names

- Basaglar
- Lantus
- Levemir
- Toujeo
- Tresiba

Timing/Delivery

- Begins working: 2-4 hours
- Peak (works the hardest): No peak
- Done working: 14-24 hours
- Can be given by: syringe or pen

Mix Insulin

Names

- Humalog Mix 75/25
- Humulin Mix 70/30
- Novolog Mix 70/30

Reviewed by Anastasia Albanese-O’Neill, PhD, APRN, CDCES on 11/26/25

This document is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Our aim is to promote active participation

in your care and treatment by providing information and education. Questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options should be discussed with your physician.

Recommended

How Does Insulin Work?

Care and Storage of Insulin

Drawing Insulin from a Via

Using an Insulin Pen

What is a Pump?

Sources

Insulin, Medicines, and Other Diabetes Treatments — NIDDK

Insulins Unplugged — diaTribe

Manufacturer Links

Admelog

Afrezza

Apidra

Basaglar

Fiasp

Humalin R U-500

Humalin N

Humalog

Lantus

Levemir

Novolog

Toujeo

Tresiba