



Understanding Insulin

There are several different types of insulin available. You may be on several types or just one, depending on your individual needs. Insulin is a hormone that your body produces naturally, and its job is to move the sugar from your blood into your cells so you can use it for energy.

Rapid-acting: Novolog, Humalog, Apidra

- **Function:** Works to take care of the food you are eating or lower a high blood sugar
- **Onset of Action:** Starts acting within 15 minutes
- **Duration:** Lasts 3-4 hours

Long-acting: Lantus, Levemir

- **Function:** Provides long term coverage to work between meals and overnight
- **Onset of Action:** Starts acting within 2-4 hours
- **Duration:** Lasts 20-24 hours

Short-acting: Humulin R, Novolin R

- **Function:** Takes care of the food you are eating
- **Onset of Action:** Starts acting within 1/2 an hour to 1 hour
- **Duration:** Lasts 3-6 hours

Intermediate-acting: Humulin N, Novolin N

- **Function:** Covers between meals and overnight, but lasts half as long as long acting
- **Onset of Action:** Starts acting within 2-4 hours
- **Duration:** Lasts 10-16 hours

Pre-mixed: Novolog 70/30, Novolin 70/30, Humalog 75/25 or 50/50, Humulin 70/30 or 50/50

- **Function:** Provides a combination of 2 different types of insulin, either a rapid-acting or a short-acting and an intermediate-acting insulin.
- **Onset of Action:** Varies
- **Duration:** Varies

Tips:

- Insulin needs to stay in the refrigerator to keep it fresh until you are ready to use it. However, once you start using it, most insulin pens and vials can stay good at room temperature for up to 28 days.
- Always eat after taking a rapid acting or a short acting insulin to avoid low blood sugar. You can remember the acronym "PIE" or POKE (check blood sugar), INJECT (give insulin), EAT.

