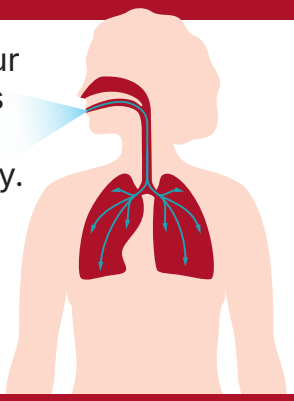
American Diabetes Association®

Inhaled Insulin: A Mealtime Insulin Option

Inhaled insulin is a rapid-acting powder form of insulin that you breathe into your lungs using an inhaler, rather than injecting using an insulin pen or syringe. This gives you another way to take rapid-acting insulin if you can't self-inject due to anxiety over needles, vision loss, trouble using your hands, or a mental disability.



When inhaled insulin enters the bloodstream, it:

- Starts lowering blood glucose (blood sugar) in about **10–15 minutes (onset)**
- Reaches its strongest effect in roughly **30 minutes (peak)**
- Leaves the body quickly, usually within **1.5 to 3 hours (duration)**

How do you take it?

You use inhaled insulin to manage blood glucose at the beginning of meals. The inhaler is a small, palm-sized device that comes with single-use, color-coded cartridges with 4, 8, or 12 units of insulin. To take a dose, you:



Load a cartridge into the inhaler and keep it level.



Breathe out fully away from the inhaler, then take a deep breath through the mouthpiece. Hold your breath for as long as comfortable and exhale.



Throw away the cartridge.

The inhaler must be replaced every 15 days.

Who can use it?

Inhaled insulin is FDA-approved for adults and children aged 6 and older living with diabetes.



Important Safety Rules

- People taking long-acting (basal) insulin will still need to take it with injections.
- Inhaled insulin is not for people with asthma, COPD or lung cancer. Your doctor will perform a breathing test (spirometry) before you start and periodically (at six months and then annually) to check your lung function.
- The most common side effects include a mild dry cough, sore throat, or low blood glucose. Drinking water before and after use can often help with the cough.
- Inhaled insulin should be at room temperature before you use it.

Talk with your doctor about which of the insulin and insulin delivery options fit your needs and will be best to help you reach your goals. The best choice is the one that helps you stay healthy and happy.

Learn more at **diabetes.org/insulin-basics** | 1-800-DIABETES (800-342-2383)