

# Levemir (insulin detemir) basics

**Lowers blood sugar.** Levemir (insulin detemir) is an effective, long-acting insulin that provides all-day sugar control, but there are similar medications that can be used instead.

## What to expect when starting

Here's when people typically experience benefits as well as some possible side effects. Your experience may be different.

	Hours	Days	Weeks	Months	Long term
<b>Levemir (insulin detemir)</b> Drug effectiveness					
<b>Possible side effects†</b>					
<b>Upper respiratory tract infection</b>					
<b>Low blood sugar</b>					
<b>Swelling in the limbs</b>					
<b>Stomach flu</b>					
<b>Weight gain</b>					
<b>Cough</b>					

† Data on frequency of side effects is not available.

## Tips from pharmacists

- Make sure you and your family know the symptoms of low blood sugar (sweating, shakiness, weakness, headache, blurry vision) and how to treat it. Always have a good source of sugar nearby for low blood sugar episodes.
- Inject Levemir (insulin detemir) at the same time every day, and rotate injection sites to prevent hard lumps from developing. Make sure you understand how to give yourself the injections correctly.
- Don't shake the vial or mix it with another insulin. Only use Levemir (insulin detemir) if the solution is clear and colorless with no visible particles.
- Store unopened vials in the refrigerator. Opened vials are good at room temperature for 28 days.
- Changes in meals or exercise regimens can cause your blood sugar to be low or high, so try to maintain consistency. Speak to your doctor if this changes, as your dose may need to be adjusted.
- Make sure you use a new pen needle each time. Reusing a used pen needle puts you at risk of an infection.

## Risks and warnings

Contact your doctor if you experience any of these.

### Life-threatening low blood sugar (Hypoglycemia)

Very low blood sugar is life-threatening. Understand how your body warns you of low blood sugar, this may include fast heartbeat, sweating, pale skin, shakiness, confusion or irritability. Make sure you have access to easy sugar sources to treat low blood sugar episodes.

### Complications due to low potassium

Levemir (insulin detemir) can cause a shift in potassium, from outside the cells to inside the cells, this can lead to low potassium levels. Your doctor will likely monitor potassium levels if you are at risk for low potassium levels (ie. using potassium-lowering medications). Untreated low potassium levels may cause irregular heartbeats, trouble breathing and death.

### Severe allergic reactions

Levemir (insulin detemir) raises the chances of severe and life-threatening allergy. Stop taking this medication and seek immediate medical attention if you have trouble breathing or develop a rash.