

Combining exenatide with insulin may be 'best result ever' for diabetes patients: UNC expert

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A new study finds that combining the newer diabetes drug exenatide with insulin provides better blood sugar control in patients with type 2 diabetes than insulin alone and helps promote weight loss.

"This study may be the best result ever for patients whose diabetes is inadequately controlled on a combination of pills and insulin," said John Buse, MD, PhD, lead author of the study and chief of the Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine.

"Until now, it was inconceivable that you could get such patients under excellent control with weight loss and no significant problems with hypoglycemia," Buse said.

[Type 2 diabetes](#) is a devastating disease, a leading contributor to blindness, amputations, [kidney failure](#), heart attack, stroke and even cancer. But the most powerful [diabetes drug](#), a formulation of [insulin](#) called Lantus, is associated with weight gain and low blood sugar reactions that may limit the success of more intensive treatment.

Exenatide (brand name: Byetta) is a newer diabetes drug whose active ingredient was first discovered in the saliva of the Gila monster, a large lizard from the Arizona desert. "It has the advantages of not leading to [low blood sugar](#) and in fact promotes weight loss," Buse said.

"Because Byetta and Lantus have very different strengths, we thought that combining the two had the potential to give us the best of both. It is wonderful, when you guess right."

More information: The study was published online on Dec. 7, 2010 by the *Annals of Internal Medicine* and will appear in the Jan. 18, 2011 print issue of the journal.

Provided by University of North Carolina School of Medicine

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