



The Insulin Cartel • Explained

- Despite being a necessity for 34 million Americans, the price of insulin has become criminally expensive. It's the insulin monopoly at work: only three giant companies control the market: Eli Lilly, Sanofi, and Novo Nordisk.
- The insulin cartel has worked together to illegally raise prices in tandem to rip off Americans and make it out of reach for those who need it to survive. As a result, many diabetic patients are forced to ration or skip their dosage – risking their health to stay financially afloat.
- **At its worst, death is the price of corporate greed.** Diabetic patients who go without the drug because they simply can't afford it could die an excruciating death in a matter of days.
- In August, Democrats tried to pass legislation that would cap the cost of insulin at \$35 a month to prevent needless deaths. Republicans [blocked](#) this measure.
- The insulin cartel has exploited a system that allows them to price gouge while millions of patients suffer – and yet politicians have failed to rein in their power.

- **Last month, Rep. Katie Porter (D-Calif.) [introduced](#) the Competitive Prices Act to crack down on price gouging and profiteering by monopolies that have caused the price of insulin to skyrocket.**
- That's because too many elected officials have gotten too close to Big Pharma, collecting thousands campaign donations from the same companies killing patients.

Why you should care:

- **RACIAL INEQUITY:** Black and brown Americans are [more likely](#) than white Americans to develop diabetes and need insulin. At the same time, they are less likely to have access to quality health care services, and more likely to experience serious diabetes-related health complications. Amputations, which are an all-too-common consequence of untreated diabetes, are now [soaring](#) in the Black community with Black Americans more than three times more likely to need an amputation than white Americans.
- **BREAK EM' UP:** When insulin was first discovered in 1923, the patent was sold for only \$1 so that this life-saving drug could be made widely available and affordable. But now, only three companies – Eli Lilly, Sanofi, and Novo Nordisk – [control nearly 100% of the American supply of insulin](#) and they illegally work together to raise the price of insulin, only caring about high profit margins over the patients who use their drug to survive. For example, there were [at least 13](#) tandem price increases between Sanofi and Novo Nordisk just between 2009 and 2016.

Key Stats:

- More than [34 million](#) Americans have diabetes and [7.4 million](#) require daily insulin to survive.
- The total annual cost of diabetes is [\\$327 billion](#), according to a 2017 study. \$237 billion is spent each year on direct medical costs and another \$90 billion on reduced productivity.
- 14% of people who use insulin in the United States face what are described as ["catastrophic" levels of spending on insulin](#), meaning they spent at least

40% of their post subsistence income – what is available after paying for food and housing – on insulin.

- In 1996, when the pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly debuted its Humalog brand of insulin, a fast-acting type of insulin, a vial cost \$21. It now costs [10x](#) its original price.

Have a question about corporate power or an idea for an upcoming edition? Please let us know. If you know a fellow advocate, leader, or organization who would also benefit from this, please encourage them to [sign up here](#).

If you need a deeper dive into the insulin cartel or have any questions, let us know! Please reach out to our Communications Director, Bianca Recto for more information and guidance: bianca@fightcorporatemonopolies.org

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