

Diabetes: Just the Basics

Common Medications to Treat Type 2 Diabetes

Diabetes pills are not for everyone with diabetes. People with type 1 diabetes must use insulin, and many people with type 2 diabetes take insulin to treat their diabetes. However, many people with type 2 diabetes can manage their diabetes with pills, or pills and insulin. Keep in mind that diabetes medications work best when combined with a daily diet and exercise plan.

It is important to know the name of your diabetes medicine, how it is taken, reasons for taking it, and possible side effects. Diabetes pills work in different ways and may be used together. The goal is to help control your blood sugar.

Some pills:

- Stop your liver from releasing too much sugar
- Help your pancreas to make more insulin
- Help your body better use your insulin
- Slow digestion or the digestion of some carbohydrates

When should I call my healthcare provider?

- If you have very low or very high blood sugars
- If you are concerned about any new side effects
- If you stop taking your pills for any reason

What may affect how my pills work?

- Alcohol
- Other illnesses or worsening kidney or liver problems
- Over-the-counter medications
- Herbal preparations

Steps To Better Health

- Take your pills at the right time every day
- Eat at regular meal times
- Keep a list of your medications in one place and keep it up to date
- Check your list of medications with your healthcare provider at every visit

Your Pills

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Glucose-lowering medications for Type 2 Diabetes

There are many categories of medications that lower glucose and several combinations of these categories for people with type 2 diabetes. Each has a different way of helping you control your diabetes. Your healthcare provider will decide which pills are best for you.

Class	Generic or brand name	Where they work	How they control your blood sugar	Side effects/ Comments
Alpha-glucosidase Inhibitors	Acarbose/ Precose	Intestine	Slow the digestion of starches. Post-meal blood sugars are lowered.	Bloating, gas, & diarrhea, which usually improve after 6 months. Take with first bite of food.
Biguanides	Metformin/ Glucophage	Liver and Muscle cells	Stop the liver from releasing too much glucose. Also makes muscle cells more sensitive to insulin. Pre-meal blood sugars are lowered.	Bloating, decreased appetite, nausea, and diarrhea. Usually improve after a few weeks. Take with meals.
Dipeptidyl peptidase-4 (DPP-4) inhibitors	Sitagliptin/Januvia Saxagliptin/Onglyza Linagliptin/Trajenta Others	In the bloodstream	Prevent the breakdown of GLP-1, a hormone that increases insulin release from the pancreas	Rarely, headache or upper respiratory infection. May cause pancreatitis.
Glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) agonist	Exenatide/Byetta Liraglutide/Victoza Exenatide ER/Bydureon Others	Pancreas, liver, intestine	Given by injection. Stop the liver from releasing too much glucose; slow digestion, increase insulin release when glucose is high	Nausea and vomiting in 15-40%. May cause pancreatitis. Some preparations increased a hormone associated with a rare form of pancreatic cancer in animal testing.

Class	Generic or brand name	Where they work	How they control your blood sugar	Side effects/ Comments
Meglitinides	Nateglinide/Starlix Repaglinide /Prandin	Pancreas	Help pancreas release more insulin. Post-meal blood sugars are lowered.	Low blood sugar. Take up to 30 minutes before each meal. Don't take if you are skipping a meal.
Sodium-glucose co-transporter 2 (SGLT2) inhibitors	Canagliflozin /Invokana Dapagliflozin/Farxiga Empagliflozin/Jardiance Others	Kidney	Increases glucose in the urine, allowing the body to discard extra glucose	Frequent urination, genital and urinary yeast and bacterial infections
Sulfonylureas	Glyburide/ Glipizide/ Glimepiride	Pancreas	Help pancreas to release more insulin.	Low blood sugar and weight gain. Take with meals. Don't take if you are skipping a meal.
Thiazolidinediones (TZDs)	Avandia/ Actos	Muscle cells	Make muscle and liver cells sensitive to insulin. Fasting blood sugars are lowered.	Weight gain and swelling. Takes 4-6 weeks to see an effect on your blood sugar.
Combination Pills	Glucovance Avandamet Metaglip Actoplus met Avandaryl Duetact Janumet			
Insulin	Many types	Muscle, Fat	Insulin replaces the natural hormone that is in short supply or absent in people with diabetes. Can lower fasting and post-meal sugars.	Low blood sugar and weight gain. Dose may need to be reduced for exercise or changed to match the size of meals.