



Joslin Diabetes Center



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ORAL DIABETES MEDICATIONS SUMMARY CHART

What Oral Medications Are Available for Type 2 Diabetes?

Type 2 diabetes results when the body is unable to produce the amount of insulin it needs to convert food into energy or when it is unable to use insulin appropriately. Sometimes the body is actually producing more insulin than is needed by a person to keep blood glucose in a normal range. Yet blood glucose remains high, because the body's cells are resistant to the effects of insulin. Physicians and scientists believe that type 2 diabetes is caused by many factors, including insufficient insulin and insulin resistance. They increasingly believe that the relative contribution each factor makes toward causing diabetes varies from person to person.

It is important to know the name of your diabetes medicine (or medicines), how it is taken, the reasons for taking it and possible side-effects.

Diabetes Pills	How to Take	How They Work	Side Effects	Of Note
Biguanides Metformin (Glucophage) Metformin liquid (Riomet) Metformin extended release (Glucophage XR, Fortamet, Glumetza)	Metformin: usually taken twice a day with breakfast and evening meal. Metformin extended release: usually taken once a day in the morning.	Decreases amount of glucose released from liver.	Bloating, gas, diarrhea, upset stomach, loss of appetite (usually within the first few weeks of starting). Take with food to minimize symptoms. Metformin is not likely to cause low blood glucose. In rare cases, lactic acidosis may occur in people with abnormal kidney or liver function.	Always tell healthcare providers that it may need to be stopped when you are having a dye study or surgical procedure.
Sulfonylureas Glimepiride (Amaryl) Glyburide (Diabeta, Micronase) Glipizide (Glucotrol, Glucotrol XL) Micronized glyburide (Glynase)	Take with a meal once or twice a day.	Stimulates the pancreas to release more insulin, both right after a meal and then over several hours	Low blood glucose, occasional skin rash, irritability, upset stomach	Because these medicines can cause low blood glucose, always carry a source of carbohydrate with you. Follow your meal plan and activity program. Call your healthcare provider if your blood glucose levels are consistently low. If there is an increase in your activity level or reduction in your weight or calorie intake, the dose may need to be lowered.
Meglitinides Repaglinide (Prandin) D-Phenylalanine Derivatives Nateglinide (Starlix)	Both of these medications should be taken with meals. If you skip a meal, skip the dose.	Stimulate the pancreas to release more insulin right after a meal.	Effects diminish quickly and they must be taken with each meal; may cause low blood glucose.	These work quickly when taken with meals to reduce high blood glucose levels. However, they are less likely than sulfonylureas to cause low blood glucose.

Related Links

- ▶ [Prandin "Oral Hypoglycemic Agent"](#)
- ▶ [Oral Diabetes Medications Summary Chart](#)
- ▶ [Actos "Insulin Sensitizer"](#)
- ▶ [What is Avandamet?](#)
- ▶ [Avandia "Insulin Sensitizer"](#)

Other diabetes care on the website as well as contact information to improve the quality of

