

Medication for type 2 diabetes

Type 2 diabetes is managed using a combination of lifestyle modifications and medication. The use of medication as soon as it is needed reduces the risk of developing complications caused by diabetes. Diabetes medications can be given as a tablet or an injection.

People with type 2 diabetes often take different medications to help manage blood pressure, cholesterol or other conditions. Special care is needed to avoid unwanted drug interactions and side effects.

Together you and your doctor will choose the best medications for you.

How can I be 'medicine-wise'?

Diabetes medications are used alongside eating well, physical activity and self-care education. Managing your medications can be a challenge, but the tips below will help you avoid mishaps.

- > record details of your medications on a list, including why you are using them.
- > read the consumer medicine information from your pharmacy and keep this information handy.
- > know the name of each medication, and what it looks like.
- > only take the dose prescribed by your doctor.
- > take the medication at the prescribed time. Ask your doctor or pharmacist what to do if you miss a dose accidentally.
- > if you have side effects talk to your doctor before stopping or changing the dose.
- > store your medication in the original container. Store away from heat and damp conditions or direct sunlight.
- > do not store medication in the bathroom or near a sink. Do not leave it in your car.
- > always keep out of reach of children.
- > take out-of-date or unused medication to the pharmacy for safe disposal.
- > if you intend becoming pregnant you should discuss this with your doctor.
- > discuss any problems with your doctor, credentialled diabetes educator or pharmacist.

There are also self-care activities that people with type 2 diabetes may need to learn. Some of these include:

- > testing blood glucose levels
- > what to do if the blood glucose goes too high (Sick Day Action Plan)
- > what to do if the blood glucose level goes too low (Hypo Action Plan)
- > what to do if unwell (Sick Day Action Plan).

It is important to see your doctor regularly (at least every 6 to 12 months) to have your medication reviewed. This review allows you to ask whether you should change the dose or stop taking them.



A **Home Medicine Review** involves your doctor and an accredited pharmacist and may be useful to help you avoid problems with your medication.

What if I am taking a few medications?

There are a number of medication organisers — such as ones you can fill yourself each day or week, or blister packs (eg Webster™ packs) filled by the pharmacist for a small fee. This may help you to separate your medication into the times and days you need to take them. Ask your pharmacist for advice.

It is important to tell your health professional about all the medication you are taking - including prescription, over the counter and complementary medicines (herbal, 'natural', vitamins and minerals) - as they may interact with diabetes medicines and affect your blood glucose levels.

My medication list

Medication name	Use for	Strength	Dose	Start dose	Review date
Example: Metformin	type 2 diabetes	500mg	1 tablet morning and night	12/11/2014	12/11/2015

This factsheet only provides brief information about diabetes medications.

Ask your health professional to download the Consumer Medicines Information for your medications or go to http://www.nps.org.au/search_by_medicine_name.

Types of diabetes medications

Diabetes medications work in different ways and vary in dose, strength and side effects. The most common ones are listed below.

Type	Things to look for	What to do
Metformin helps the body use its own insulin better and reduces the amount of glucose produced from the liver.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > nausea > diarrhoea > stomach cramps > decreased appetite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > take during or at the end of a meal to avoid stomach upsets > talk to your doctor about any side effects
Sulphonylureas increase the amount of insulin made by the pancreas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > low blood glucose (hypoglycaemia) > alcohol may increase risk of hypo > slight weight gain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > have an 'Hypo Action Plan' > have a plan for alcohol use > talk to your doctor, diabetes educator or dietitian for advice
Gliptins (DPP4 Inhibitors) increase the amount of insulin in the blood. They also reduce the amount of glucose produced by the liver.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > dizziness, headaches > respiratory infections, cold like symptoms > urinary tract infections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > talk to your doctor about any side effects
Incretin Mimetics (GLP1) is given by injection, but it is not insulin. Increase the amount of insulin in the blood, slows emptying of the stomach and reduces the amount of glucose produced by the liver.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > nausea, loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhoea and heartburn, stomach pain > headaches, dizziness and feeling jittery > decreased appetite > modest weight loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > make sure you take the injection within 1 hour before the meal > do not have after a meal > talk to your doctor about any side effects
Acarbose slows the absorption of certain carbohydrate foods and rate of glucose entering the bloodstream.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > abdominal pain > diarrhoea > flatulence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > if at risk of low blood glucose from other diabetes medication you must use a glucose product to treat hypo > talk to you doctor about side effects
Glitazones increase the effect of insulin.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > excess fluid > weight gain > increased risk bone fractures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > if you notice any swelling (oedema) tell your doctor straight away
Sodium Glucose Cotransporter-2) Inhibitors (SGLT-2) lowers blood glucose by passing excess glucose in the urine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > genital infections > back pain > changes in cholesterol > headache, sore throat > diarrhoea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > low blood glucose may be worse if taking another diabetes medication > talk to your doctor about side effects
Insulin supplements your own insulin when you can no longer make enough of your own.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > low blood glucose > weight gain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > have a Hypo Action Plan > talk to your health professional about ways to keep your weight stable > have a plan for alcohol use

For more information

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