

Medications to Treat Type 2 Diabetes

Type 2 diabetes can be treated with insulin shots, other injections, pills, or a combination.

What medication should I take to treat my diabetes?

Diabetes medicines work in different ways and are often used together. The goal is to help manage your blood sugar.

Some people with type 2 diabetes are able to manage their diabetes with pills alone. Other people with type 2 diabetes need take insulin shots to treat their diabetes. There are also newer injectable medicines that are helpful for some people with diabetes. In many cases, a combination of pills and shots may be needed.

The table below reviews the different types of diabetes medications.

All diabetes medications work best when combined with a daily diet and exercise plan.

How do diabetes pills work?

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 the digestion of some carbohydrates

When should I call my healthcare provider?

- If you have very low (less than 70 mg/dl) or very high (persistently higher than 300 mg/dl) blood sugar
- If you are concerned about any new side effects
- If you stop taking your pills for any reason

What things might affect how well my medicines work?

- Alcohol
- Other illnesses
- Worsening kidney or liver problems
- Over-the-counter medications
- Herbal supplements

What should I know about taking my pills?

- Take your pills at the right time every day
- Eat at regular meal times
- Review your list of medications with your healthcare provider at every visit
- It is important to know what medication(s) you are taking. Keep a list of your medications in one place and keep it up to date with this information:

- o Name of your diabetes medicine
- o How to take it
- o Reasons for taking it
- o Possible side effects

Examples of diabetes medications and how they work

Generic or brand names	Class	Where they work	How they control your blood sugar	Side effects/ Comments
Metformin/ Glucophage <i>Pills</i>	Biguanides	Liver and intestine	Stops the liver from releasing too much glucose. Improves intestinal handling of glucose. Pre-meal blood sugars are lowered.	Bloating, decreased appetite, nausea, and diarrhea. Usually improve after a few weeks. Take with food.
Glyburide/ Glipizide/ Glimepiride <i>Pills</i>	Sulfonylureas	Pancreas	Helps pancreas to release more insulin.	Low blood sugar and weight gain. Take with meals. Don't take if you are skipping a meal.
Pioglitazone / Actos <i>Pills</i>	Thiazolidinediones (TZDs)	Liver and fat cells	Makes liver and fat 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.
Sitagliptin/Januvia Saxagliptin/Onglyza Linagliptin/Trajenta Others <i>Pills</i>	Dipeptidyl peptidase-4 (DPP-4) inhibitors	Bloodstream	Prevents the breakdown of GLP-1, a hormone that increases insulin release from the pancreas.	Rarely, headache or upper respiratory infection. May cause pancreatitis.
Canagliflozin /Invokana Dapagliflozin/Farxiga Empagliflozin/Jardiance Others <i>Pills</i>	Sodium-glucose co-transporter 2 (SGLT2) inhibitors	Kidney	Increases glucose in the urine, allowing the body to discard extra glucose.	Frequent urination, genital and urinary yeast and bacterial infections. Weight loss.
Exenatide/Byetta Liraglutide/Victoza Exenatide ER/Bydureon Dulaglutide/Trulicity Others <i>Injections</i>	Glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) agonist	Pancreas, liver, intestine	Stops the liver from releasing too much glucose; slows digestion; increases insulin release when glucose is high.	Nausea and vomiting in 15-40%. Weight loss.

Nateglinide/Starlix Repaglinide/Prandin <i>Pills</i>	Meglitinides	Pancreas	Helps 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.
Acarbose/Precose <i>Pills</i>	Alpha-glucosidase Inhibitors	Intestine	Slows the digestion of starches. Post-meal blood sugars are lowered.	Bloating, gas, and diarrhea, which usually improve after 6 months. Take with first bite of food.
Many types: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glargine • Basaglar • NPH • Degludec <i>Injections</i>	Long-acting insulin	Liver, muscle, fat cells	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.

Patient Care Advice (PCOI) documents are available under **Resources** on your Patient Gateway home page.

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