

Diabetes Medicines: Be Safe with High-Risk Medications

There are lots of different medicines to manage diabetes and they work differently for each person. There are several factors to consider when taking diabetes medications. One symptom to watch out for is low blood sugar, which can make you feel dizzy or shaky. Your blood sugar levels are always changing, depending on what you eat and activity level. Your doctor can help you use the medicines safely and determine the medicine that is the right one for you.

Diabetes Treatment Goals

- To keep the blood sugar as normal as possible without serious high or low blood sugars
- To prevent damage to tissues, blood vessels and organs caused by too much sugar in the blood stream

Understanding Your Diabetes Medicines – Pills

1. Biguanides (metformin)

- **What it does:** Helps lower your blood sugar after eating
- **How to take it:** Usually with food to avoid upsetting your stomach
- **Remember:** If you feel sick, nauseous or have a stomach ache, tell a professional

2. Sulfonylureas (glipizide, glyburide)

- **What it does:** Tells your body to make more insulin
- **How to take it:** Usually once or twice a day, within 30 minutes of mealtime
- **Remember:** Eating meals at the same time every day helps this medicine work best

3. DPP-4 inhibitors (alogliptin, linagliptin, saxagliptin, sitagliptin)

- **What it does:** Helps your body make insulin when your blood sugar is high
- **How to take it:** Swallow the pill with water
- **Remember:** Take it at the same time each day

4. SGLT-2 inhibitors (bexagliflozin, canagliflozin, dapagliflozin, empagliflozin, ertugliflozin)

- **What it does:** Helps your kidneys get rid of sugar through your urine
- **How to take it:** In the morning, with or without food
- **Remember:** Drink lots of water to stay hydrated



Understanding Your Diabetes Medicines - Injectables

5. Insulin - long-acting and short-acting (many products available)

- **What it does:** Acts like the insulin your body should make
- **How to take it:** Injection with vial and syringe, insulin pen, or use in an insulin pump
- **Remember:** Store as recommended! Take as directed! There are long-acting and short acting insulins. Some people only use long-acting insulin once a day, others use a combination of long-acting and short-acting insulin in multiple doses throughout the day. Understand your recommended dose

6. Non-insulin Injectables – GLP-1 RAs, GIP/GLP-1 RAs (liraglutide, tirzepatide, semaglutide)

- **What it does:** helps the pancreas release more insulin when blood glucose increases and slows food digestion
- **How to take it:** Injection as directed
- **Remember:** Can cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhea and may decrease your appetite

Tips for Taking Your Medicine Safely:

- Always take your medicine as your doctor tells you
- Don't share your medicine with anyone else
- Keep a list of your medicines and how to take them
- If you forget to take your medicine, don't take extra next time. Take it as soon as you remember

You may need other medicines to manage or reduce the risk of complications from diabetes such as:

- Managing blood pressure
- Managing cholesterol
- Lowering the risk of heart attack
- Vaccines
 - Influenza (flu)
 - Pneumonia
 - COVID-19

Follow Your Diabetes Care Plan

- Follow your meal plan
- Exercise as directed
- Call your healthcare team if your blood glucose has been above your goal for more than three days and you don't know why

Preventing Side Effects:

A. Hypoglycemia (Low Blood Sugar)

- Symptoms: shakiness, sweating, confusion, weakness, dizziness
- Prevention:
 - Monitor blood sugar regularly
 - Always carry a source of fast-acting glucose (e.g., glucose tablets, juice, or candy)
 - Inform family and friends about hypoglycemia symptoms

B. Hyperglycemia (High Blood Sugar)

- Symptoms: increased thirst, frequent urination, fatigue, blurred vision
- Prevention:
 - Follow your prescribed medication regimen
 - Maintain a healthy diet and exercise routine
 - Seek medical attention if blood sugar remains consistently high

C. Other Side Effects:

- Weight gain, gastrointestinal issues, skin reactions and allergic reactions

For healthy eating, staying active and medication tips and resources – provided by NovoCare®, scan or click the QR code.

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