



Medicines for Diabetes Control

WHEN MEDICINE IS NEEDED

Your type of diabetes determines the diabetes medicine you need. For Type 1 diabetes, insulin is required because none is being made by the body. For those with Type 2 and gestational diabetes, diet and exercise may be enough.

If medicine is needed for gestational diabetes, only insulin can be used. Diabetes pills are dangerous to the baby. For Type 2 diabetes, diabetes pills and/or insulin may be taken. Even with diabetes pills or insulin, a good diet and regular exercise are still important for the best diabetic control.

ORAL MEDICATIONS

There are many oral diabetes medications. They may be taken in combination with each other or alone. Sometimes insulin and oral medications are used together. How the medication works may determine when and how often you take it.

Diabetes pills can lower the blood sugar in four different ways:

- Make the body produce more insulin.
- Make the liver produce less glucose.
- Make the cells use insulin better.
- Slow the absorption of carbohydrate after meals.

INSULIN

There are different kinds of insulin. Some act very quickly while others last over 24 hours. Your doctor will decide the type, amount and frequency of insulin doses you will take. Short acting insulins are regular insulin and Lispro. Medium acting insulins are NPH and Lente. While the very long acting insulin is called Ultralente.

INSULIN (CONTINUED)

Many people mix two different insulins to control their blood sugar over the day. Some regular and medium acting insulins are already pre-mixed. Other people use an insulin pump to deliver small amounts of short acting insulin throughout the day.

SIDE EFFECTS

Ask your health care provider about side effects from these medications. Report any side effects right away to your doctor. One of the most common side effects will be hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). Symptoms of hypoglycemia include:

- shakiness
- hunger
- irritability
- cold sweat
- dizziness
- any sudden personality change

Do not ignore these symptoms. Test your blood sugar if possible. If the blood sugar is too low, eat or drink some quick carbohydrate like 8 ounces of reduced fat milk, 3 glucose tablets, 5 life savers or 4 ounces of juice or soft drink with sugar.

Rest for 15 minutes and test again. If the blood sugar is still low, treat again. Don't over treat because your blood sugar may then get too high.

If a meal is due within 30 minutes, eat as soon as possible. If the meal is later, have a glass of milk or some cheese and crackers to prevent hypoglycemia before the meal. If hypoglycemia happens often, your medicine, diet or activity may need adjustment.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. Do I have written instructions about how to take my diabetes medication?
2. What side effects could happen?
3. If I experience hypoglycemia, how will I treat it?

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