

TYPE 2 and YOU

Tips for better understanding your diabetes

What You Can Learn From This Handout... How diabetes medicines work in your body

DIABETES MEDICINES: HOW THEY WORK

There are a lot of different ways to treat type 2 diabetes. Losing weight, watching what you eat, and getting enough exercise are key things you can do to help keep your blood glucose in the target range. But these approaches alone aren't enough to manage your diabetes.

When you have type 2 diabetes, your pancreas makes less and less insulin, and your body has trouble using the insulin that it does have. Without enough insulin, glucose stays in the blood and your blood glucose levels rise higher than they should. That's why your doctor will prescribe medicines for your diabetes that work in different ways in your body. Here is where, and how, they work.

Your Intestines

Diabetes medicines that work in your intestines slow your digestion, helping to keep your body from releasing glucose too quickly from the food you eat into your blood.

Your Liver

Diabetes medicines that work in your liver stop the liver from sending too much glucose into the blood.

Your Muscles and Body Fat

Diabetes medicines that work on your muscles and body fat lower your body's resistance to insulin, making it easier for insulin to bring glucose from the blood into your muscles and fat for energy.

Your Pancreas

Diabetes medicines that work on your pancreas help it to make more insulin to send into your bloodstream.



Ask your healthcare provider these questions to learn more about managing your diabetes:

1. What is my main problem? _____
 2. What do I need to do? _____
 3. Why is it important for me to do this? _____
- My diabetes medicines: _____

Source: Partnership for Clear Health Communication at the National Patient Safety Foundation.

Types of Diabetes Medicines

All are pills you take by mouth unless otherwise noted.

Alpha-glucosidase inhibitors

Lower your blood glucose after a meal by slowing down digestion of carbohydrates in your intestines.

Amylin analogs Slow your digestion, tell your brain you are full sooner at meals, and tell your liver to send out less glucose. (injectable)

Biguanides Limit the amount of glucose released from your liver and help your own insulin to work better.

DPP-4 inhibitors Help the pancreas to make more insulin when your blood glucose is high, and signal the liver to send less glucose after a meal.

GLP-1 mimetics Tell the pancreas to release insulin after a meal, move food through your intestines more slowly, and tell the liver to release less glucose. (injectable)

Insulin Made by the pancreas to maintain blood glucose levels. When your body doesn't make enough insulin, doctors sometimes prescribe manufactured insulin to boost the amount in your body. (injectable)

Meglitinides Help the pancreas to release a burst of insulin at mealtimes.

Sulfonylureas Help the pancreas to put more insulin into your blood to lower blood glucose levels.

Thiazolidinediones Help your body's insulin to work better by making your muscles and body fat more sensitive to insulin.

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Your Healthcare Professional