

# MEDICATIONS FOR TYPE 2 DIABETES

THIRD EDITION





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## **MEDICATIONS FOR TYPE 2 DIABETES**

Many people who live with Type 2 Diabetes take medications to help control blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol. This book will give you some information about the medications that you might be prescribed to help lower your blood sugar.

Think of medications as just one of the many tools that you can use to take control of your diabetes. It is also important to eat a healthy diet and get regular physical activity. These things together can help manage your blood sugars and prevent complications such as heart attack, stroke, kidney disease and blindness. Starting medications does not replace a healthy lifestyle nor does it mean you have failed or made mistakes with healthy eating and/or exercising.

## **HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET**

The information in this booklet is designed to give you a brief introduction to the various medications that you might take if you have Type 2 Diabetes. This booklet serves as a reference guide to help you understand what the medications are and why they have been prescribed for you. It may also get you thinking about options you want to discuss with your diabetes health care team.

The sections at the end of the booklet cover more topics, such as:

1. Low blood sugar (hypoglycemia).
2. Special instructions for sick days.
3. Questions you should ask your pharmacy team members.

## ORGANIZING YOUR MEDICATIONS

Living with diabetes can be hard work. Your doctor or diabetes nurse will remind you of all the important things you can do to take care of your condition. This will include making healthy food choices, getting plenty of exercise, and becoming or staying smoke free. Your doctor or diabetes nurse might also want you to take medications, like the ones listed in this booklet.

If you have questions about your medications, always remember that your pharmacist is available to help. You might be able to book an appointment if you have a lot of questions. Some pharmacists are also Certified Diabetes Educators; ask at your pharmacy if this resource is available for you.

### Here are some tips that might make it easier to keep your medications organized:

- Routines and habits take the work out of remembering. Some people take their medications in the morning as they get ready to start the day. Other people take their medications at the end of the day when things are less hectic and busy. What works for you? Talk to your pharmacist about finding a routine that works best for you and your medications.
- Ask your pharmacy team if they can prepare pill packs for you; ask to see what options are available, including weekly or monthly blister packs.
- Make yourself a chart or calendar, so that you can keep track of your doses.
- Keep your medications together in a convenient place, but make sure that everything is stored safely and in an optimal environment (not too hot or too cold, not too humid, away from direct sunlight and out of reach of children).
- Some people find that reminders are helpful, like an alarm on your phone or a gentle nudge from friends and family.

It is normal for people to forget to take their medications once in a while. If this happens, check with your doctor or pharmacist on what to do next.

## Important **SAFETY TIPS** for organizing your medications include:

- Take note of the colour, shape and size of your pills. Make it a habit to remember what you should be taking. Always ask at the pharmacy if the pills don't look right!
- Return old or unused medications to your pharmacy for safe disposal. Don't keep old medications at home, especially if your doctor no longer wants you to take them. Do not keep old antibiotics or pain killers if they were prescribed for a single illness or injury. They might not be the best choice for the next time you are sick or hurt.
- Make sure that you know how to store your medications. Some need to be stored in the fridge, and some products need to be used before a certain date. It is always a good idea to keep medications in the original pharmacy container.
- Remember to keep your medications out of reach of children and pets, including used medications or testing supplies and needles. Your pharmacy team members will give you instructions for safe storage and disposal of these items.

If you feel like your medication regimens are complicated or confusing, ask your diabetes team for help. Your pharmacist can help you organize your routine and give you advice about how to take your medications. Your team might also have ideas about simplifying things, such as:

- Reducing the number of pills by using combination tablets (a tablet or capsule that contains multiple medications).
- Reducing the number of times a day that you need to take your medications.
- Making sure that every medication prescribed still makes sense for you.

## BLOOD SUGAR MEDICATIONS

Sugar, or glucose, is an important fuel for your body, and powers everything from your heart beat to your complicated thoughts and ideas. Balancing blood sugar is a complex process, your liver, kidneys and even your gut all work to keep the balance. Insulin is an important part of this process, because without it, the working cells cannot absorb glucose from your blood. Diabetes means that your body is unable to keep the amount of sugar in your blood in a healthy range. This means that the cells won't get enough fuel, and the blood becomes too saturated with sugar. In non-diabetics, this balancing happens quickly and accurately so blood sugars are never too high or too low.

Type 2 Diabetes happens when blood sugar levels rise over time. This can cause damage to blood vessels and nerves, and increases the risk of complications like heart attack, blindness, and kidney disease. We think that Type 2 Diabetes happens when your body either does not make enough insulin, or the insulin that is made does not work properly, a phenomenon known as insulin resistance.

People with Type 2 Diabetes might take one or more medications to reduce blood sugar. It is common to start with one medication, but adding a second, third or even fourth medication may be required over time.

The types of medications that are used to treat Type 2 Diabetes include:

**Medications that help your insulin work better**

**Medications that increase the amount of insulin in your body**

**Medications that help block or delay sugars from entering your body**

**Medications that work with your gut hormones**

**Medications that help your body pass sugar in the urine**

Your doctor will select the medications that will work best for you. Not all medications work for everyone, and each person will have their own unique treatment that is best for them.

# MEDICATIONS THAT HELP YOUR INSULIN WORK BETTER

Medications that help your insulin work better include Metformin and pioglitazone/ rosiglitazone. These medications make our body cells more sensitive to the effects of insulin, leading to lower levels of sugar in our blood.

## METFORMIN

Metformin is usually the first medication that people with Type 2 Diabetes will take. It works well for most people and it doesn't usually cause dangerous side effects. It may even help to protect the heart and lowers the risks of future heart conditions.

GENERIC NAME	TRADE NAME
Metformin	Glucophage®
Metformin (extended-release)	Glumetza®

### How does this medication help diabetes?

- Helps the cells in your body use insulin better.
- Stops your liver from making extra sugar.
- Lowers the amount of sugar absorbed from the intestines.

### How to take this medication?

- It is taken once to three times daily.
- It should be taken with a meal, like breakfast or supper.

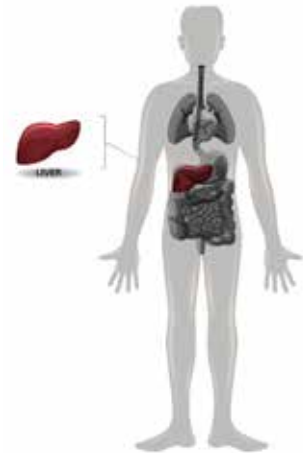
### What are side effects?

- The most common side effects are an upset stomach, diarrhea or gas/ bloating.
- Low vitamin B12 level if used long-term.
- Metformin is not likely to cause low blood sugar (hypoglycemia).
- Metformin does not cause weight gain.

Side effects such as upset stomach, gas or diarrhea usually last for a short time. It is less likely if Metformin is started at a low dose so your body has a chance to get used to the medication. The dose is then slowly increased over several weeks. A special formulation (Glumetza®) may also lessen the chance of developing side effects. Talk to your doctor if you have stomach upset or digestive problems that make it difficult to take Metformin.

### Special Instructions – Sick Days

- Your doctor might tell you to stop taking Metformin when you are sick. If you are not able to stay hydrated, there will be a higher chance of getting side effects from Metformin. Your doctor may also ask you to stop taking Metformin before undergoing a CT scan. Ask your doctor, pharmacist, or diabetes nurse for instructions or more information.





## PIOGLITAZONE, ROSIGLITAZONE

Pioglitazone and Rosiglitazone belong to a family of medication known as Thiazolidinediones (TZDs). It may take 6 to 12 weeks before you notice an improvement in your blood sugar level after starting these medications.

GENERIC NAME	TRADE NAME
Pioglitazone	Actos®
Rosiglitazone	Avandia®

### How does this medication help diabetes?

- Helps the cells in your body use insulin better.
- Stops your liver from producing extra sugar.

### How to take this medication?

- They are usually taken once to twice daily.
- You can take TZDs with or without food.

### What are side effects?

- People with certain heart conditions should not take these medications, because they can make your heart conditions worse.
- Weight gain.
- Might cause your body to retain fluids (edema), leading to swelling in arms or legs.
- Do not tend to cause low blood sugar (hypoglycemia).

## MEDICATIONS THAT INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF INSULIN IN YOUR BODY

There are 2 different groups of medications which help your pancreas release more insulin. The extra insulin helps your cells absorb more sugar out of the blood and your cells get the energy they need to function, so your blood does not end up with too much sugar.

### GLYBURIDE, GLICLAZIDE, GLIMEPIRIDE, REPAGLINIDE

Collectively, glyburide, gliclazide and glimepiride are known as sulfonylureas. Both sulfonylureas and repaglinide are classified as insulin secretagogues. Repaglinide is especially useful if your after-meal blood sugar level is elevated.

GENERIC NAME	TRADE NAME
Glyburide	Diabeta®
Gliclazide	Diamicron®
Gliclazide MR	Diamicron MR®
Glimepiride	Amaryl®
Repaglinide	Gluconorm®



#### How to take these medications:

##### Glyburide:

- Depending on the dose, it is taken once to twice daily right before you eat.
- It should be taken with the same meals each day.

##### Glimepiride:

- It is taken once daily with breakfast or first main meal of the day.

**Gliclazide** is available in 2 formulations: either a regular tablet or a long acting (MR) tablet

- Gliclazide regular release is taken once to twice daily with a meal.
- Most people take the MR formulation, because it can be taken just once a day with your first main meal of the day.
- Gliclazide MR comes in 30mg and 60mg tablets.
- The 30mg tablets must be swallowed whole, while the 60mg tablets can be split. They should not be crushed or chewed.

##### Repaglinide:

- The frequency of using this medication depends on the number of meals you consume.
- Repaglinide works very quickly, and is taken just prior to your meals or with the first bite of food.
- If you miss a meal, you should not take the dose.

### What are the side effects?

- These medications increase the amount of insulin in your body and they can cause low blood sugar (hypoglycemia).
- Refer to the “Low Blood Sugar” section of this booklet on page 17 for more information.
- People who take these medications must eat regularly – if you are not able to eat, or are eating less than usual, these medications are more likely to lead to hypoglycemia.
- Glyburide is more likely to cause hypoglycemia than any other medication for diabetes. If this happens often, or you have other illnesses, talk to your doctor about other medications that may be more suitable for you.
- Some people who take these medications can gain weight. This is more likely with glyburide.
- Sulfonylureas can increase your skin’s sensitivity to the sun. This means that you might be more likely to get a sunburn. Ask your pharmacist or diabetes nurse about sunscreen use.

### Special Instructions – Sick Days

Your doctor might tell you to stop taking repaglinide or sulfonylureas when you are sick. If you are not able to eat or drink or if you have diarrhea, there is a chance that your blood sugar will go too low. Ask your doctor, pharmacist, or diabetes nurse for instructions or more information.

## ADDING MORE INSULIN TO YOUR BODY

Some people with Type 2 Diabetes do not make enough insulin and require regular insulin injections. Insulin might also be used when you are first diagnosed with diabetes if your blood sugar is very high. In this case, treatment with insulin is needed to stop you from getting very sick from high blood sugar, but may not be used long term.

Injecting insulin can be more complicated than taking tablets or capsules, but there are some advantages. Insulin doses can be adjusted according to food and activity level, and people can fine tune their diabetes management. Unexpected changes in food or activity level can be easier to accommodate with insulin than other medications. Insulin can also help people achieve tighter control over time than with other medications.

**There are 2 types of insulin:** rapid-acting (mealtime) insulin and long acting (basal/background) insulin. People with Type 2 Diabetes might use insulin with meals throughout the day, or they might use only a single dose of background insulin.

**Rapid-acting (mealtime) insulin:** starts working within minutes of injecting, and is gone in a few hours. This insulin is usually injected with meals or large snacks. Examples include:

- Humalog<sup>®</sup>, NovoRapid<sup>®</sup>/ Fiasp<sup>®</sup> and Apidra<sup>®</sup> (rapid acting).
- Entuzity<sup>™</sup>, Humulin<sup>®</sup> R and Novolin<sup>®</sup>ge Toronto (short acting).

**Long acting (basal/ background) insulin:** this insulin is injected once or twice a day, and covers the insulin that your body needs even if you have not recently eaten. Examples are:

- Humulin® N and Novolin®ge NPH (usually injected once or twice a day)
- Lantus®/Basaglar®/Toujeo®, Levemir® and Tresiba® (usually taken once a day, sometimes twice a day).

**Combination insulins** include Humulin® 30/70, Novolin®ge 30/70, 40/60, 50/50, NovoMix® 30/70, and Humalog® Mix25 and Mix50 contain a blend of both fast/rapid acting insulin and long acting insulin. These types of insulin are usually injected twice a day with breakfast and supper. The advantage of these insulins is that people will require fewer injections; however, the pre-mixed ratio makes the dose of insulin more difficult to fine tune.

### **Concentrated insulin**

Most insulins in Canada are standard concentrations, but concentrated insulins can be helpful for people who require large doses. Examples include Toujeo® and Entuzity®.

### **How do I take insulin?**

- Insulin is only available as an injection under the skin.
- Most people who take insulin will use prefilled insulin pens. These pens are easier to use than syringes and vials, and use very short needles.
- Your diabetes nurse, doctor, or pharmacist will teach you how to safely inject insulin before you need to start.

### **How is insulin dosed?**

- No two people will require the same dose of insulin. Your dose will be based on several factors, including your diet and activity, and your overall health (including how much insulin your body continues to produce).
- Many people with Type 2 Diabetes will start with a single dose of background insulin taken once a day, and will add meal time doses throughout the day as their condition changes over time.
- Some people will be prescribed set insulin doses that will match typical food and activity levels. Other people will be taught to calculate their own insulin requirements, based on the food and activity levels that are planned for the day.

### **Your diabetes plan with insulin will cover the following:**

1. How often you need to check your blood sugar.
2. Instructions for sick days (what to do if you cannot eat or drink).
3. Insulin storage, and disposal of injection supplies.
4. How to prevent, recognize, and treat low blood sugar.

# MEDICATIONS THAT HELP BLOCK OR DELAY SUGARS FROM ENTERING YOUR BODY

## ACARBOSE

GENERIC NAME	TRADE NAME
Acarbose	Glucobay®, Prandase®

### How does this medication help diabetes?

Acarbose affects your body's ability to absorb some of the sugars from the food you eat. Carbohydrates found in starchy foods like bread and pasta need to be broken down before your body can absorb the sugars. Acarbose interferes with this process. The sugar is either not absorbed, or takes longer to reach your blood.

### How to take this medication?

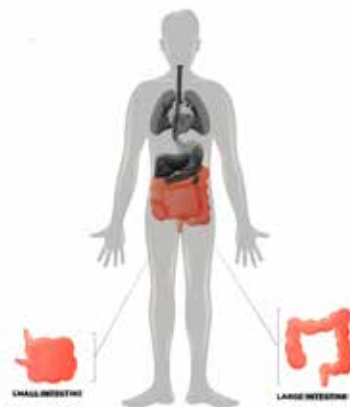
- It is usually taken three times daily.
- Acarbose is taken at the beginning of your meal.

### What are the side effects?

- Gas, stomach pain and cramping, and/or diarrhea.
- Acarbose does not cause low blood sugar if it is taken on its own.

### Special Instructions – Hypoglycemia Management

If you experience low blood sugar from other medications (eg. Glyburide, Gliclazide, insulin injection) while on Acarbose, you must restore your sugar level by taking oral glucose (dextrose) tablets. If dextrose is not available, milk or honey can also be used as an alternative. Table sugar, fruit juice or soft drinks will not work as Acarbose stops the sugar in these sources from being absorbed. Ask your pharmacist or diabetes nurse for instructions if you are using Acarbose together with medications that can cause hypoglycemia.



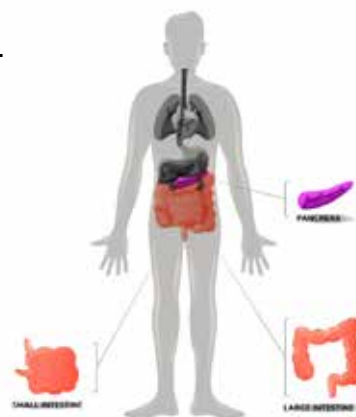
## MEDICATIONS THAT WORK WITH YOUR GUT HORMONES

These gut hormones (sometimes referred to as 'incretins') are released by your digestive tract. They play a big role in the production and release of insulin from your pancreas, and make you feel fuller for longer after eating. They are also responsible for stopping the liver from making extra sugar. One type of incretin hormone that our body makes is known as Glucagon-Like Peptide 1 (GLP-1).

### DULAGLUTIDE, EXENATIDE, LIRAGLUTIDE, LIXISENATIDE, SEMAGLUTIDE

This family of medication is known as GLP-1 Receptor Agonists.

GENERIC NAME	TRADE NAME
Dulaglutide	Trulicity®
Exenatide (twice daily)	Byetta®
Exenatide (weekly)	Bydureon®
Liraglutide	Victoza®
Lixisenatide	Adlyxine®
Semaglutide (injectable)	Ozempic®
Semaglutide (oral)	Rybelsus®



#### How do these medications help diabetes?

- GLP-1 receptor agonists are similar to the GLP-1 hormone that is released by your digestive system after you have eaten.
- They increase insulin production and secretion from your pancreas.
- By promoting fullness, most people will lose weight with these medications as they consume less food.
- Some medications in this family have also been shown to decrease your risk of developing future heart conditions.

### **How to take these medications?**

- Except for Rybelsus<sup>®</sup>, you will need to inject these medications subcutaneously (into the layer of tissue under the skin).
- Rybelsus<sup>®</sup> is an oral tablet taken daily at least 30 minutes before breakfast or the first meal of the day with no more than half a glass (125mL) of water.
- Adlyxine<sup>®</sup> and Victoza<sup>®</sup> are injected once daily.
- Bydureon<sup>®</sup>, Ozempic<sup>®</sup> and Trulicity<sup>®</sup> are injected once weekly.
- Byetta<sup>®</sup> is injected twice a day.
- These injectable medications must be stored in a fridge prior to use. Check with your pharmacist for how long they can be kept at room temperature after initial use.
- Your diabetes nurse or pharmacist will show you how to safely inject these medications, and will teach you how to properly dispose of your needles and used injection pens.
- You will usually start at a low dose of these medications and gradually increase the dose over time to minimize side effects.

### **What are side effects?**

- The most common side effects are upset stomach, diarrhea, abdominal pain, nausea and even vomiting.
- Often, you will find yourself having a decreased appetite.
- Even though your body produces more insulin, you are not likely to have low blood sugar.

## **ALOGLIPTIN, LINAGLIPTIN, SAXAGLIPTIN, SITAGLIPTIN**

This group of medications is known as Dipeptidyl Peptidase-4 (DPP-4) Inhibitors. All of these medications are also available as combination products which include metformin.

<b>GENERIC NAME</b>	<b>TRADE NAME</b>
Alogliptin	Nesina <sup>®</sup>
Alogliptin/ Metformin	Kazano <sup>®</sup>
Linagliptin	Trajenta <sup>®</sup>
Linagliptin/ Metformin	Jentaduetto <sup>®</sup>
Saxagliptin	Onglyza <sup>®</sup>
Saxagliptin/ Metformin	Komboglyze <sup>®</sup>
Sitagliptin	Januvia <sup>®</sup>
Sitagliptin/ Metformin	Janumet <sup>®</sup>

### **How do these medications help diabetes?**

- DPP-4 inhibitors help to prolong the duration of the GLP-1 hormone that is produced by your digestive system.
- With more GLP-1 hormone in your body, more insulin is produced and released by your pancreas after you eat.
- Less sugar is made by your liver when more GLP-1 hormone is in your body.

### **How to take these medications**

- These medications are usually taken once a day, and they can be taken with or without food.
- If you take a combination product, you should take your pill with food to prevent upset stomach from metformin.
- You may also take the combination pill twice a day, instead of once daily.

### **What are the side effects?**

- These medications do not usually cause weight gain or hypoglycemia.
- The most common side effect is an upset stomach.
- Very rarely they can cause joint pain or pancreatitis (which is an inflamed/swollen pancreas).

### **Special instructions: Saxagliptin (Onglyza<sup>®</sup>)**

This medication is not recommended for people with certain heart conditions, as it can make your heart condition worse. Speak with your physician or pharmacist if this medication is a suitable option for you.



# MEDICATIONS THAT HELP YOUR BODY PASS SUGAR IN THE URINE

## CANAGLIFLOZIN/ DAPAGLIFLOZIN/ EMPAGLIFLOZIN

This family of medications is known as Sodium-Glucose Co-transporter 2 (SGLT-2) Inhibitors.

The SGLT-2 Inhibitors represent the newest family of medications to combat diabetes. All of these medications are also available as combination products which include metformin.

GENERIC NAME	TRADE NAME
Canagliflozin	Invokana®
Canagliflozin/ Metformin	Invokamet®
Dapagliflozin	Forxiga®
Dapagliflozin/ Metformin	Xigduo®
Empagliflozin	Jardiance®
Empagliflozin/ Metformin	Synjardy®



### How do these medications help diabetes?

- These medications reduce blood sugar by increasing the amount of sugar that the kidney will pass through the urine.
- Your doctor might prescribe this class of medications if you have heart disease. It might help protect the heart and reduce the chance of complications from a heart attack or stroke.
- These medications can cause a small drop in blood pressure, which may benefit those who have a difficult time meeting their blood pressure goals.
- They have also been shown to slow the progression of kidney disease, which is a known complication of diabetes.

### How to take these medications?

- These medications are all taken once a day (usually in the morning), and they can be taken with or without food .
- If you take a combination product, you should take your pill with food to prevent upset stomach from metformin.
- You may also take the combination pill twice a day, instead of once daily.

### What are the side effects?

- The most common side effect with these medications is an increase in bladder infections or genital yeast infections. If these become frequent, your doctor may stop the medication as it may not be suitable for you.
- Other side effects include increased urination and dehydration.
- They carry a low risk of causing hypoglycemia.
- A rare, but serious side effect called DKA (diabetic ketoacidosis), happens when the blood becomes more acidic than normal.
  - Signs of DKA include nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, fruity-smelling breath, increased urination, excessive thirst, and fatigue or sleepiness.
  - You must seek treatment immediately as it could be life-threatening if left untreated.

### Special Instructions – Sick Days

Your doctor might tell you to stop taking this type of medication when you are sick. If you are not able to eat or drink or if you have diarrhea, there is a chance that you can become dehydrated, and this may be hard on your kidneys; therefore, you should stop taking SGLT-2 inhibitors. Your doctor may also ask you to stop taking this medication prior to undergoing major surgeries. Ask your doctor, pharmacist, or diabetes nurse for instructions or more information.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION – LOW BLOOD SUGAR

Some medications for Type 2 Diabetes can cause your blood sugar to drop too low (hypoglycemia). Medications that have the highest risk include insulin and ones that make your body produce more insulin, namely glyburide, gliclazide, and repaglinide.

### What increases your risk of low blood sugar?

- You can become hypoglycemic if you don't eat enough or skip a meal, if you take a larger dose of a medication, or if you are more active than normal.
- Hypoglycemia can also happen if you are sick and lose your appetite, if you are throwing up or have diarrhea, or if you consume alcohol and do not maintain your regular eating habits.
- Make sure that you understand your own risk for hypoglycemia, and what you can do to prevent it.

### What are the signs of low blood sugar?

- Feeling shaky, nervous, anxious, confused.
- Sweating, headache, or nausea.
- In extreme cases, hypoglycemia can cause seizures and even loss of consciousness.
- Not everyone will have all the signs and symptoms, and in some cases there may be no symptoms at all.

### How to treat low blood sugar?

- Check your blood sugar if your meter is available. If your meter is not easily within reach, you should treat your low blood sugar first, then test your sugar.
- You will need a fast acting source of sugar to raise your blood sugar. Glucose tablets (like Dex4®) are the first choice, and can be purchased from any pharmacy. Your diabetes nurse or pharmacist can help you pick another sugar that might be right for you.
- In emergency situations where there is a loss of consciousness, glucagon either by injection or nasal spray (Baqsimi®) may be necessary to treat hypoglycemia.
- Your pharmacist or diabetes nurse can give you more information about treating your low blood sugar.

Keep track of the times that your blood sugar is low, so that you can let your doctor or diabetes nurse know what happened. This will help them decide if your diabetes plan needs to change, including your diabetes medications. It is also important that family members and friends know the signs of low blood sugar and what they need to do to help you.

### Make sure that your diabetes plan covers the following:

1. Does my diabetes and the medications I take put me at risk for low blood sugar?
2. How can I exercise safely with my diabetes if I am at risk for low blood sugar?
3. What should I do if I get sick? When should I call my doctor? When do I need to get immediate medical help?
4. If I'm using insulin, how do I adjust both my mealtime and basal insulin if I'm sick?

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION – SICK DAY INSTRUCTIONS

People with diabetes get sick with coughs and colds just like everyone else. It is important that you know how being sick can affect your diabetes plan, including changes to your regular medications.

### What to look out for – high blood sugars

1. Being sick is very stressful for your body, and your blood sugar will tend to rise when your body is working to get you better. Know what to look out for if you are ill, and when you should contact your doctor.
2. Some medications, like antibiotics or steroids, can also increase your blood sugar. Ask your doctor if you should be checking your blood sugar more frequently when you are taking these medications.

### What to look out for – dehydration

1. You can run in to trouble if you are unable to drink normally, or if you are vomiting or have diarrhea. Dehydration can be hard on your kidneys and can make even mild diabetic kidney disease worse.
2. Dehydration can also mean that certain medications should be avoided until you can eat and/or drink normally. Dehydration can stress your kidneys, and certain medications might make this worse.
3. Severe dehydration can also cause very high blood sugars, which can be dangerous for people with diabetes.

### What to look out for – medication adjustments

A mild cough or cold, or upset stomach does not normally mean you need to stop taking your medications. A severe illness is a completely different situation, as you have a higher risk of serious complications if you have diabetes. Contact your doctor immediately, or get help from your community nursing station or hospital if this happens.

If you are sick, please talk to your doctor or pharmacist for guidance on when to continue or stop certain medications. This might include the following:

- Medications for diabetes: Metformin, Glyburide, Gliclazide, Repaglinide, any of the SGLT-2 inhibitors (Invokana<sup>®</sup>/ Forxiga<sup>®</sup>/ Jardiance<sup>™</sup>).
- Medications for high blood pressure: water pills/diuretics (like Lasix<sup>®</sup>/ Furosemide), ACE-inhibitors (like Ramipril, Lisinopril, Perindopril), ARBs (like Candesartan, Losartan).
- Medicines for pain: like ibuprofen, naproxen, diclofenac.

Always ask your pharmacist if you are taking any medications in these categories. Remember that there are several different brand names for the same medication, so do not hesitate to ask.

Also make sure that you ask your pharmacist before selecting an over the counter product to treat anything. Many products can be taken safely, but you might need to avoid certain ones. Your pharmacist can help you pick the right product, once they know about your overall health, and what medications you normally take.

# IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR PHARMACIST AND YOUR PHARMACY TEAM

**Your pharmacist can be a great source of information and advice.**

**Some questions that your pharmacist should help you with include:**

1. What medications am I taking? (the same medication might be called different names, so make sure you know what you are taking). What are they for? Ask for a list or chart that you can take home with you.
2. Am I taking my medications properly? Am I taking them at the right time? And at the correct dose? If I have trouble swallowing tablets, are there other options available?
3. Are there any drug interactions that I should know about?
4. Are there important side effects that I should know about?
5. Are there any non-prescription products or supplements that would not be safe to take together with my medications or because of my medical conditions?
6. Are there questions that I should write down and discuss with my doctor or nurse at our next appointment?

**Some important questions that you should ask the rest of the pharmacy team include:**

1. Do your records have my up-to-date information (what allergies have you recorded? My phone number and address? Is my insurance information up-to-date)?
2. Do you offer deliveries?
3. What types of pharmacy pill packs can you prepare for me?
4. How should I arrange for refills (phone call, or on-line application)?
5. How much time would you need to prepare my prescriptions or pill packs?
6. Can you help me remember when I need to make an appointment with my doctor (will you remind me when I have no refills remaining)?

## WHO PAYS FOR MY MEDICATIONS?

Many medications and supplies that are required by people with Type 2 Diabetes will be covered by a government program or your own private insurance. Government programs that Yukon residents can access include:

1. Yukon government Pharmacare Program:
  - Covers Yukon residents who are age 65 or over (or who are at least 60 years old and are married to a Yukon resident who is 65 years old or over).
  - Contact the Pharmacare Program at 867-667-5403, or toll free in Yukon at 1-800-661-0408, extension 5403.
2. Yukon government Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits Program:
  - Covers most medications and certain supplies that are required for people with diabetes.
  - Your doctor or community health nurse must apply to the program for you.
  - There's an annual deductible.
  - Contact the Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits Program at [yukon.healthcare@yukon.ca](mailto:yukon.healthcare@yukon.ca) or phone 867-667-5209 or toll free in Yukon at 1-800-661-0408, extension 5209.
3. Non-Insured Health Benefits:
  - Covers eligible First Nation and Inuit residents.
  - Contact the Non-Insured Health Benefits Yukon office at [sac.nihb-ssna.isc@canada.ca](mailto:sac.nihb-ssna.isc@canada.ca) or phone 867-393-3800, or toll free at 1-866-362-6717.

Residents are also expected to seek reimbursement from private insurance before accessing these programs. These programs serve as the payer of last resort.

All programs cover a wide selection of prescription medications that are used to both treat diabetes, and to prevent or treat complications of diabetes. Injection supplies such as needles and syringes, as well as blood sugar testing supplies such as test strips, lancets and some glucometers are also covered by the three programs.

All programs have a formulary that identifies which medications are covered, and whether there are special conditions or limitations for that coverage. Newer medications are often not covered immediately by government programs.

Pharmacists are a great resource to help you explore options for covering the cost of your medications. You can often check online if you have questions about coverage, and your pharmacist can help you find the most up-to-date drug coverage information.

## **CONTACT AND RESOURCE INFORMATION**

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

**Chronic Conditions Support Program  
Health and Social Services  
Government of Yukon**

867-667-8733

toll-free in Yukon, NWT and Nunavut: 1-800-661-0408 ext. 8733

[ccsp@yukon.ca](mailto:ccsp@yukon.ca)

**Yukon Diabetes Education Centre**

867-393-8711

[diabetes.centre@wgh.yk.ca](mailto:diabetes.centre@wgh.yk.ca)

**Diabetes Canada**

[www.diabetes.ca](http://www.diabetes.ca)

1-800-226-8464

[info@diabetes.ca](mailto:info@diabetes.ca)



**Yukon**



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