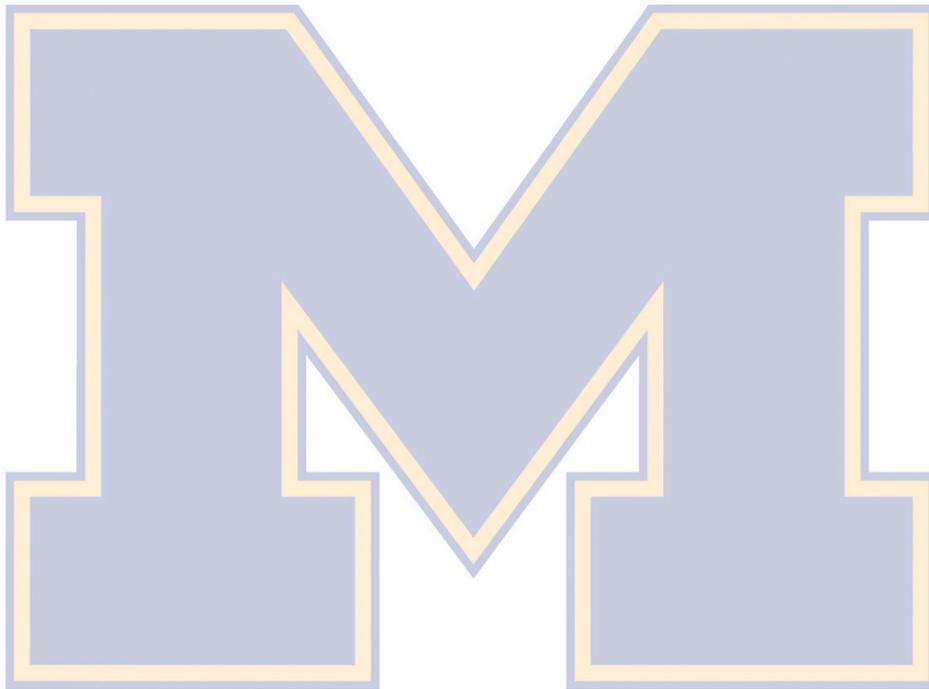


# Newsletter #13

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## Diabetes Pills

If you pay attention to the news or watch TV, you are probably hearing a lot about diabetes and new pills or other treatments. But what does that mean for you?

Diabetes is treated in steps or stages. The first step is meal planning and exercise and often metformin or another pill. Over time, pills or other medicines may be added to keep your blood sugar in a safe range. As hard as it is to take medicines, most people say they feel better when their blood sugar stays more even and in the target range.

It is important to understand that going from one step to another does **not** mean that your diabetes is worse or that you have not done a good job of caring for it. It simply means that your body needs more help to keep your blood sugar in your target range.

There is no one best pill or way to treat diabetes. The best medicines to treat **your** diabetes are the ones that keep your blood sugar where you want it, and have the fewest side effects at the lowest cost. Resources for finding lower-cost medicines are: [www.goodrx.com](http://www.goodrx.com) and [www.pparx.org](http://www.pparx.org).

There are 7 different types of pills for treating diabetes. They work in different ways and have different benefits. It is very common to take more than one type of pill or to take pills plus insulin or other injections.

**Biguanides:** Keep the liver from putting out too much glucose overnight and after meals.

- Metformin (Glucophage) is an example of a biguanide.

- Take with your main meal to prevent stomach upset.
- Side effects: stomach upset, metal taste, weight loss.

**Sulfonylureas:** Help your pancreas to make more insulin.

- Glyburide (Micronase, Glynase, Diabeta), glipizide (Glucotrol) and glimepiride (Amaryl) are examples of sulfonylureas.
- Take glipizide (Glucotrol) 30 minutes before meals to give it time to work. Others can be taken with meals, but work best if taken at about the same time every day.
- Side effects: low blood sugar, weight gain.

**Thiazolidinediones (TZDs):** Increase insulin sensitivity

- Pioglitazone (Actos) and rosiglitazone (Avandia) are examples of TZDs.
- Take at about the same time each day. They take time to start working (2-12 weeks) so give them a chance.
- Side effects: weight gain, swelling in the feet and legs.

**DPP-IV Inhibitors:** Stimulate the release of insulin and slow down the release of glucose by decreasing the breakdown of the incretin hormones (made in the intestine).

- Sitagliptin (Januvia), saxagliptin (Onglyza) and Linagliptin (Tradjenta) are examples of DPP-IV inhibitors.
- Take at about the same time each day with or without food.
- Side effects: stuffy nose, headache.

**SGLT2 Inhibitors:** Cause excess glucose to go out through the kidneys

- Canigliflozin (Invokana), dapagliflozin (Farxiga) and empagliflozin (Jardiance), are examples of SGLT2 inhibitors.
- Take at about the same time each day.
- Side effects: urinary tract and other infections, dehydration, thirst

**Glitinides:** Help your pancreas to make more insulin, but only when the blood sugar is high, such as after a meal.

- Repaglinide (Prandin) and nateglinide (Starlix) are examples of glitinides.
- Take at least 30 minutes before each meal. If you skip a meal, skip your pill as well.
- Side effects: low blood sugar, weight gain.

**Alpha-glucosidase inhibitors:** Block the enzymes that break down carbohydrates from food into blood sugar.

- Acarbose (Precose) and miglitol (Glyset) are examples of these.
- Take with first bite of each meal. If you skip a meal, skip your pill.
- Side effects: bloating, gas, upset stomach.

You can also get combinations forms of some of these medicines. Some examples are: Glucovance (glyburide/metformin), Metaglip (glipizide/metformin), Avandamet (rosiglitazone/metformin) and Janumet (sitagliptin/metformin).

No one likes to take medicines and it can be very costly. But, keeping your blood sugar on target helps you feel better today and prevents complications in the future.

**Ask your nurse or doctor the following questions:**

1. Is the pill that I am taking the best one to manage **my** blood sugar?
2. What are the benefits and negatives of the medicine I am taking?
3. Is there a less costly medicine I can take that will work as well?
4. Does the drug company offer any coupons, rebates or assistance programs to pay for any of my medicines?