

# TAKING CARE OF DIABETES WITH MEDICINES

## Can I take pills instead of injections?

Some people with type 2 diabetes control blood sugar (glucose) with diet and activity. Most will need to add pills. Some must use insulin shots. Remember, there is no “best” diabetes medicine for everyone. The best diabetes care plan is the one that works best for you. You and your care team will decide the best way to manage your blood sugar.

## What do diabetes medicines do?

The two general types of diabetes medicines are pills and injections.

**PILLS:** There are many different types of diabetes pills. New ones come out almost every year! Different pills work in different ways in the body. Some pills for diabetes help your body make more insulin. Others help the insulin in your body work better. Pills can be used alone, with other pills, or with insulin. Talk with your diabetes care team. Be sure the medicines you take can be taken together safely.

**SHOTS:** Many people with diabetes must take insulin shots (injections). Pills may not control their blood sugars well enough. Insulin shots replace what the pancreas can no longer make. There are other medicines also given as a shot to help insulin work better. These medicines must be given as a shot to work properly. They should not be taken by mouth.

## I'm taking all my pills. Why is my blood sugar not going down?

It can take a few days or even weeks for the medicines to work well. Checking your blood sugar is important. You will talk with your diabetes team often. If high blood sugar continues, your doctor or diabetes care team may look at changing your care plan to bring your blood sugar levels down.



## In the meantime:

- ▶ Do not stop taking your pills!
- ▶ Try not to get frustrated. Contact your care team if you need help.
- ▶ Side effects are more likely to occur or return if you miss too many pills.

## I'm feeling different on these medicines. Why?

Some people feel “funny” as their blood sugar gets closer to target. Let your diabetes care team know if you have:

- ▶ Dizziness or headaches
- ▶ Upset stomach or diarrhea
- ▶ Blurry vision

You may have short-term changes in your vision if your blood sugars are going from normal to high or from high to low. Tell your diabetes care team about any changes in your vision.

Remember, do not stop taking your pills!



### How can I remember to take my pills or shots?

Try some of these tips to remember your medicines:

- ▶ Place sticky notes on the bathroom mirror
- ▶ Place reminders next to your blood sugar meter
- ▶ Place reminders in your calendar
- ▶ Don't get upset if your mom or dad reminds you
- ▶ Set the alarm on your watch or cell phone

### What if I forget to take my pills?

Call your diabetes care team as soon as you realize you forgot your medicines. You can likely still take your medicine.

### What about holidays when we fast for a day? What do I do?

Talk with your care team. You may need to stop your medicine that day. Or you may need to take a smaller amount.

Don't make any changes to your medicine without talking with your team first. Check your blood sugars an extra time or two on days when you're fasting or have a different schedule. Keep drinking water during your fast.

### I am on pills now. Will I ever have to take shots?

Maybe. This is a tough question. At first, you may be able to manage your blood sugar with diet, activity, and pills. After a while, pills might not be enough. Your body may stop making enough insulin. That's when you may need to start taking shots. You might take pills with insulin, or insulin alone.

Insulin is also needed:

- ▶ When you're sick. Blood sugar can get so high when you're sick that you may need insulin to lower it.
- ▶ Right after diagnosis. Sometimes people start insulin right after diagnosis. This gives the body a chance to heal. Insulin helps lower blood sugar levels quickly. Then pills can work better.

## Manage Diabetes with STAR

Managing diabetes means making choices—some easy, some hard. When faced with a decision, think STAR:

**STOP** before you make a decision.

**THINK** about your choices. Consider how they will affect you.

**ACT** on the better choice for your health. Small steps add up to big results!

**REFLECT** on your progress. Give yourself credit for healthy choices.