

Type 2 Diabetes Medications

The goal of treating type 2 diabetes is to achieve and maintain optimal blood sugar levels. Some people who have type 2 diabetes can achieve their target blood sugar levels just by dieting and exercising, but many need diabetes medications to reduce blood sugar levels. Oral diabetes medications are recommended for type 2 diabetes patients because the pancreas has not completely stopped working.

Various classes of oral medications are available for type 2 diabetes patients. Each medication has a different composition and a different mechanism of action. Certain medications stimulate the pancreas to produce more insulin, while others help reduce insulin resistance. There are also types that work on slowing the body's absorption of carbohydrates.



Drug class	What it does	Benefits	Side effects
Sulfonylureas	These medications stimulate the body to secrete more insulin.	Fast-acting.	Low blood sugar, upset stomach, skin rashes, and weigh gain.
Meglitinides	These medications stimulate the body to secrete more insulin. They're fast-acting, but the duration of their effect in the body is shorter.	They are fast-acting. They only stimulate insulin secretion when blood sugar levels are elevated.	Low blood sugar.
Biguanides	These medications prevent the production of glucose in the liver and improve tissue sensitivity to insulin.	They can cause weight loss and slightly reduce harmful cholesterol and triglycerides.	Metallic taste in the mouth, nausea, vomiting, upset stomach, diarrhea, gas, bloating, loss of appetite, skin rashes, and in some cases, harmful lactic acid buildup.
Alpha-glucosidase inhibitors	These medications act by slowing down the absorption of carbohydrates.	They do not result in weight gain.	Upset stomach, gas, and diarrhea.
Thiazolidinediones	These medications improve the patient's sensitivity to insulin and protect the cells that secrete insulin.	They reduce blood pressure and triglycerides.	Fluid retention, weight gain, vision problems, chest pain, increased risk of congestive heart failure for certain patients, as well as bladder cancer, etc.



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Dipeptidyl peptidase-4 inhibitors (DPP-4 inhibitors)	These medications help stimulate insulin production and reduce the amount of glucose being produced by the liver.	They do not cause weight gain or low blood sugar.	Upset stomach, diarrhea, sore throat, upper respiratory infection, skin rashes, and pancreatitis.
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