

CHAPTER FIVE

TAKING MEDICATION FOR DIABETES

Let's talk about taking medication for your diabetes.

Your doctor or diabetes educator can tell you the best times to take your diabetes medicines.

There are many different types of insulin, so you will need to talk with your doctor, pharmacist, or diabetes educator about how they work and the best time to take them.

Diabetes Pills

Diabetes pills are given to those people who still make some insulin. These pills help lower blood sugar in many different ways.

You need to know how your diabetes pills work. Please ask your doctor or diabetes educator about your pill.

These are some of the questions you may have.

- When should I take it?
- How often should I take it?
- Can I take it with other pills?
- Are there any side effects?



Please tell your doctor if your pills make you feel bad or cause any other problems.

Remember diabetes pills alone cannot control your blood sugar. You will still have to follow advice about diet and exercise given by your doctor or diabetes educator.

Sometimes people who follow their diet and regularly exercise are able to stop taking medicine because they have lost weight. Losing even a little bit of weight can sometimes help to lower your blood sugar.

Insulin

Insulin is needed when your body either no longer makes enough insulin to lower blood sugars or the insulin you make doesn't work right.

- Insulin does not come in a pill.
- You will have to give yourself shots every day.
- Your doctor will decide the amount of insulin you should take every day.
- Some people need only 1 shot a day, and other people may need as many as 4 shots every day.



Your doctor and diabetes educator are there to help you learn how to give yourself shots.

Listed below are a few guidelines:

Where should you give the shot?

- Your stomach area
- The outside part of your upper arm
- The outside part of your upper legs
- Your hip



- Avoid areas with scars and stretch marks.
- Always use your own needles. Do not share with anyone. Your doctor or diabetes educator will tell you how to dispose of your needles.
- Insulin can be stored at room temperature; an extra bottle should be kept in the refrigerator.

Many people with diabetes do not take medication. Diet and exercise control their diabetes.



Write down in the space below any questions or concerns you may have about diabetes pills or insulin.

Low Blood Sugar (Hypoglycemia)

People who have diabetes and use insulin or diabetes pills can have low blood sugar.

Low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) happens when the sugar level in the blood falls below 70 mg/dl.

Possible Causes

- Skipping meals or snacks or eating them later than usual
- More activity than usual
- More medication than needed (insulin or pills)
- Alcohol without food

You may feel

- Weak or shaky
- Sweaty
- Heart “racing”
- Dizzy
- Hungry
- Nervous
- Confused



You need to treat this immediately!

TREATMENT

- Test your blood sugar, if possible. If you think your blood sugar is low, but are not able to test, treat with one of the following:
 - 1/2 cup fruit juice
 - 5 Lifesaver candies
 - 2 tablespoons raisins
 - 1/2 cup pop (not diet)
 - 3 glucose tablets
 - 3 peppermint candies
- Wait 10-15 minutes
 - Recheck your blood sugar, if possible.
 - If you don't feel better and your blood sugar is still less than 70, repeat the treatment.
- If the next meal is more than one-half hour away, eat or drink one of the following:
 - 8 oz. milk
 - 1/2 sandwich
 - Cheese or peanut butter with 4-6 crackers
- If you still do not feel better, call your doctor.

SAFETY TIPS

- Have a sugar source with you at all times (like hard candy).
- Treat symptoms early.
- Wear a diabetes ID bracelet or necklace and carry a card in your purse or wallet.
- Be sure that your family, friends, and coworkers know what they can do to help you. (Give them copies of page 6.)
- Check your blood sugar level before, during and after exercise or increased activity.

