

DIABETES MEDICATIONS: METFORMIN

TRANSCRIPT

Biguanides are a class of oral medications you may be prescribed when you have type 2 diabetes. They include Glucophage, Glucophage XR, Riomet and Fortamet. Please note that these are the brand names of these medications. You're probably more familiar with the generic name metformin.

Taking metformin stops your liver from releasing too much stored glucose into your bloodstream. To see how this medication works, let's look at how diabetes affects the way your body uses the food you eat.

When you eat most of the food changes to glucose, a form of sugar and is used for energy now or stored in the cells for later use. However, between meals, your body still needs glucose for energy. When you haven't eaten, your pancreas releases glucagon. Glucagon triggers the liver to release stored glucose to be used for energy.

In many people with type 2 diabetes, the liver releases too much stored glucose, causing your blood glucose level to stay high. But when you take a biguanide, you stop the liver from releasing too much stored glucose into the bloodstream.

This lowers your blood glucose level between meals, and even while you sleep at night. Your diabetes care team will tell you the correct dose and time to take metformin, but it is usually taken with meals.

Side effects may include diarrhea, nausea, abdominal pain, bloating, a metallic taste in your mouth, and weight loss. If you have any side effects, let your diabetes care team know about them. However, do not stop taking your diabetes medication unless you are told to do so.

The health of your liver and kidneys should be checked before starting this medication, and every two months for a year as you continue to take it. Metformin can increase your risk of a serious condition called lactic acidosis. You are more likely to develop lactic acidosis if you have certain health conditions or drink large amounts of alcohol. If you drink more than two to four alcoholic drinks a week, tell your healthcare provider; you probably should not be taking metformin.

You may need to temporarily stop taking metformin before having medical procedures using contrast dyes.

Taking your diabetes medication as directed will help you gain control of your blood glucose levels and help you avoid the long-term complications of diabetes.