

THE IMPORTANCE OF STARTING AND STAYING ON TYPE 2 DIABETES MEDICINES

Think of it like brushing your teeth every day. Your type 2 diabetes (T2D) medicine is like dental care for your body. If you skip it, problems can build up quietly over time—even if everything seems fine at first.

It's important to keep taking your T2D medicines consistently over time. These medicines give your body the ongoing help it needs to manage your glucose (blood sugar) level. Sticking with your treatment, along with healthy habits and guidance from your diabetes care team, helps your body stay healthy for the long run.

This handout reviews how medicines help you manage your T2D and provides practical ideas for overcoming challenges.



How Do Medicines Help You Manage Your T2D?

T2D is a chronic disease that can lead to serious complications if not well-managed. Taking medicines helps you manage your T2D by

- » Keeping glucose (blood sugar) levels stable, which helps you feel better.
- » Reducing the risk of diseases that can go along with consistently high glucose, such as heart disease, kidney damage, and vision problems.
- » Helping lower your risk of going into the hospital

You'll get the most out of your medicine if you also take other steps to manage your T2D, like eating healthy, staying active, and managing stress.

What are Some Questions to Ask About Your Medicine?

You may worry about your medicine because of things you've heard from friends, family, or the internet. The best way to get the right information is to ask your care team questions. Asking questions can help you take your medicine the right way and feel more confident. Here are some good questions you can use to learn more about your medicine.

Medicine Purpose and Function

- ☐ What is the name (brand and generic) of the medicine?
- ☐ What is it for?
- ☐ How does it work and how does it help me?
- ☐ If I don't have symptoms, do I still need it?

Medicine Instructions and Dosage

- ☐ How do I take it?
- ☐ How many times a day, with or without food?

Medicine Expectations and Monitoring

- ☐ How will I know it's working?
- ☐ Should I expect to feel different once I start taking it?
- ☐ What are the side effects I should watch out for, and what should I do if I experience them?
- ☐ How will this medicine affect me if I stay on it for a long time?

Managing T2D can feel overwhelming sometimes, but taking your medicine consistently can help you feel your best—and avoid serious health problems. This chart has actions you can take to help with some common medicine-taking challenges.

Common Challenges to Medicine-Taking	Actions You Can Take	SAFETY TIP Don't stop medicines on your own—some medicines require stopping slowly over time or adjusting the amount you take. Stopping them abruptly can lead to other health problems. 
I'm having side effects.	✓ Talk openly with your clinician. They can adjust your dose, build the dose up more slowly, or switch your medicine.	
The medicine is expensive.	✓ Ask your clinician and/or pharmacist about lower-cost options or discounts such as co-pay cards and patient assistance programs. While medications may require an upfront cost, taking them as prescribed can help prevent complications and save you money in the long run.	
I sometimes forget to take my medicine.	✓ Link taking your medicine with something you already do at that time, like brushing your teeth or eating. If you miss a dose, talk to your your prescribing clinician or pharmacist about adjusting your treatment.	
Having to take medicines at different times of day is hard for me.	✓ Ask your clinician if there is an alternative medicine that could be taken once a day or weekly, or if there is a combination form of two of your medicines.	
I feel better and have reached my goals. I don't think I need the medicine anymore.	✓ Talk with your clinician about how stopping your medicine once you have achieved your goals will affect you long-term. Some medicines need to be continued to maintain the positive results you have achieved, especially since T2D changes over time.	
I am tired of taking medicine.	✓ Share what feels most difficult about taking medicines with your clinician so they can provide additional support to make it less overwhelming.	

Want to learn more about staying on track with your T2D medicines?

Additional helpful resources for people with T2D who take medicines: diabetes.org, beyondtype1.org, dia-tribe.org