Intermountain® Healthcare

Diabetes Medications: *Meglitinides*

What are meglitinides?

Meglitinide medications are used to treat type 2 diabetes. They're taken by mouth (orally) as a pill. Meglitinides work best when you're following the rest of your diabetes treatment plan. This means checking your blood glucose regularly, following your meal plan, and exercising every day. It may also include taking other diabetes medications.

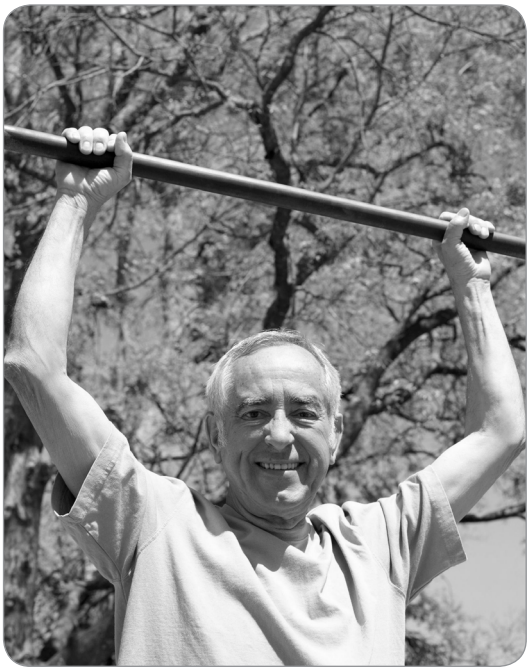
What do they do?

Meglitinides help to lower the amount of glucose in your bloodstream (your blood glucose) — particularly the glucose from the meal you just ate. They do this by **increasing the amount of insulin released by your pancreas**. With more insulin to "unlock" your body's cells, more glucose can move into them. Your blood glucose goes down.

Why is this medication important for my health?

Meglitinides can't cure your diabetes. But by helping control your blood glucose, they lower the chance that your diabetes will cause serious problems.

As you know, when you have diabetes, you tend to have high blood glucose. Over time, this can damage your blood vessels and nerves, leading to heart attack or stroke, kidney and eye disease, and problems with your teeth, feet, and skin. If you have high blood pressure or high cholesterol — like many people with diabetes — you have an even greater risk for these problems. (This is why you should always take your blood pressure or cholesterol medications as well as your diabetes medications.)



Examples of meglitinide medication are **repaglinide (Prandin)** and **nateglinide (Starlix).** Like other diabetes medications, meglitinides work best when you follow the rest of your diabetes treatment plan.

Guidelines for taking meglitinides

You should always follow your doctor's specific instructions for taking any medication, including meglitinides. But there are some general rules that will probably apply to you:

1 **Before you start taking a meglitinide, make sure your doctor knows about:**

- **Any allergies** you have, especially an allergy to this medication.
- **Any health conditions** you have besides diabetes, especially any diseases of the liver, kidneys, or adrenal or pituitary glands.
- **Anything else you take** for your health, like vitamins, herbal supplements, or other over-the-counter and prescription medications.

2 **Take these medications just before each meal:**

- **Take your meglitinide just before each meal.** These medications begin to work quickly, so plan to eat soon after taking them.
- **If you miss a meal, don't take your dose.** At your next meal, just take the usual amount. Do NOT double your dose.
- **If you eat an extra meal, take an extra dose** of your meglitinide.

3 **Follow these instructions:**

- **If your blood glucose levels drop into the normal range, or if you decide you feel fine now, do not stop taking this medication.** You need this medication to stay well.
- **If you're sick, most of the time you should keep taking your medication as prescribed.** Check your blood glucose more often. Call your doctor if you're having trouble controlling your blood glucose.
- **If you plan to become pregnant, talk to your doctor.** These medications usually aren't used during pregnancy or while breastfeeding.

My medication (name): _____

Strength (mg per pill): _____

How much to take / when to take: _____

_____

Other instructions: _____

_____

What are the side effects?

Meglitinides can sometimes cause **hypoglycemia (low blood glucose)**, especially when you exercise vigorously or don't eat enough. Since low blood glucose can be dangerous, make sure that you and your family know the symptoms. These include feeling **shaky, sweaty, hungry**, and **irritable**. If you have these symptoms, take in some quick-acting sugar. Good sources are 3 or 4 glucose tablets, a half-cup of fruit juice or regular soda, or a tablespoon of honey or sugar.

Meglitinides can also cause **back pain**, **joint pain**, **cough**, a **stuffy nose**, and **diarrhea**. Less often, they cause constipation and feelings of numbness, dizziness, tingling, or burning. These side effects often go away as your body adjusts to the medication. Call your doctor if they continue.

When to call or see your doctor

- You have questions about how to take your medication.
- You're thinking about stopping your medication. (Never stop without talking to your doctor first.)
- You're ill and having trouble controlling your blood glucose.
- You have side effects that don't go away.

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