

My Medication Primer

Class of Medication	Generic/ [Brand Name(s)]	Where It Works	What It Does
Biguanides	Metformin [Glucophage]	Liver	Metformin acts on the liver to decrease the production of glucose. It is often the first oral medication prescribed to help you manage your diabetes.
Sulfonylureas	Chlorpropamide [Diabinese], glipizide [Glucotrol and Glucotrol XL], glyburide [Micronase, Glynase, and Diabeta], glimepiride [Amaryl]	Pancreas	Sulfonylureas stimulate the pancreas to release more insulin. They've been in use since the 1950s.
Meglitinides	Repaglinide [Prandin], nateglinide [Starlix]	Pancreas	Meglitinides also stimulate the pancreas to release more insulin.
Thiazolidinediones	Rosiglitazone [Avandia], pioglitazone [ACTOS]	Liver, muscle and fat tissue	These drugs help insulin work more effectively in the muscle and fat tissues. They also help the liver produce less glucose.
DPP-4 inhibitors	Sitagliptin [Januvia], saxagliptin [Onglyza], linagliptin [Tradjenta], alogliptin [Nesina]	In the bloodstream	DPP-4 inhibitors prevent the breakdown of GLP-1, a compound your body naturally makes. GLP-1 helps reduce blood glucose levels in the body, but without an inhibitor it breaks down too quickly to help manage blood glucose effectively. DPP-4 inhibitors slow the breakdown process.

SGLT2 inhibitors	Canagliflozin [Invokana], dapagliflozin [Farxiga], empagliflozin [Jardiance]	Kidneys	This new class of drugs works in the kidneys to prevent reabsorption of blood glucose, causing it to be eliminated in the urine.
Alpha-glucosidase inhibitors	Acarbose [Precose], miglitol [Glyset]	Intestines	These drugs block the breakdown of starches (bread, potatoes, pasta) in the intestine and slow the breakdown of some types of dietary sugars, slowing the rise of blood glucose after a meal.
Bile acid sequestrants	Colesevelam [Welchol]	Throughout the body	Bile acid sequestrants (BAS) are primarily used to lower cholesterol in the bloodstream, but they also reduce blood glucose levels in people with diabetes. It is not known how they lower blood glucose. BAS drugs are often prescribed for patients who can't take other medications because of liver problems.
Ergot alkaloids	Bromocriptine mesylate [Cycloset]	Unknown	This medication lowers blood glucose levels in the bloodstream. The exact mechanism by which bromocriptine mesylate does this is currently unknown.
Combination medications	Sitagliptin/metformin [Janumet], dapagliflozin/metformin hydrochloride extended release [Xigduo XR], canagliflozin/metformin [Invokamet], alogliptin/metformin [Kazano], alogliptin/pioglitazone [Oseni], others	Various	Combination medications pair two medications for better blood glucose control. They work in various ways to achieve this. Adding a second drug is usually more effective in lowering blood glucose levels than is switching one drug for another.

Vitamins, minerals, herbal supplements	Fenugreek, Asian ginseng, alpha lipoic acid, chromium, aloe vera, bitter melon, Chinese herbal medicine, garlic, magnesium, milk thistle, nettle, omega 3s, prickly pear cactus, sweet potato, vitamins C and D	Various	There is very little evidence that any vitamin, mineral, or herbal supplement can help you manage your blood glucose effectively.
Acupuncture, yoga	N/A	Various	Both acupuncture and yoga can contribute to overall well-being. But there is very little evidence that either one can help you manage your blood glucose effectively.

In addition to oral medications, there are other non-insulin injectable medications available. These are generally prescribed when blood glucose levels are not being lowered sufficiently by oral medications and insulin. They include:

Class of Medication	Generic/ [Brand Name(s)]	Where It Works	What It Does
Injectable non-insulin	Exenatide [Byetta], exenatide XR [Bydureon]	Liver and pancreas	This drug works to reduce the liver's glucose output while enhancing insulin production and release. Note that Byetta should not be used with fast- or short-acting insulin.
Injectable non-insulin	Liraglutide [Victoza]	Liver and pancreas	This drug also reduces the liver's glucose output while enhancing insulin production and release.
Injectable non-insulin	Pramlintide [Symlin]	Stomach, liver	Pramlintide slows the movement of food through the stomach in order to keep blood glucose levels from spiking too high. It also reduces the liver's glucose output.