

Oral Antidiabetic Drugs

Diabetes develops when the level of blood sugar increases due to insufficient or ineffective insulin secreted from the pancreas. Blood sugar is then released via urination, leading to “sugary urine”, or diabetes. The disease may give rise to multiple complications, and in severe cases, coma. Patients must receive long-term treatment to maintain the stability in blood sugar, thereby reducing the risk of complications.

Classification of Antidiabetic drugs

Antidiabetic drugs can be classified into two categories:

1. Insulin injections: Mostly used on serious cases of diabetes.
2. Oral antidiabetic drugs: Suitable for most adult patients. There are two common types of oral antidiabetic drugs:
 - a) Sulphonylureas: They increase insulin secretion. Common examples are chlorpropamide, glibenclamide and gliclazide.
 - b) Biguanides
Metformin is an example.

These drugs can only be sold on doctor’s prescription in registered dispensaries.

Side Effects of the Drugs

Initial medication may give rise to some transient reactions such as diarrhoea, dizziness, headache and vomiting. These effects would gradually subside after some time when your body adjusts to the drugs.

Advice on Medication

1. Take the drugs half an hour before meals or as instructed by your doctor. Once the drugs are taken, do not delay the mealtime.
2. If you miss a dose, take it as soon as possible unless it is almost time for the next scheduled dose. In that case, skip the missed dose and take the next dose as directed. Do not take double doses.
3. In case of frequent symptoms of low blood sugar such as hunger, weakness, trembling, cold sweating and dizziness, inform your doctor. If the patient

becomes unconsciousness or goes into coma, he/she should be rushed to the accident and emergency department by his/her family members.

4. As soon as symptoms of low blood sugar occur, the patient should immediately take some sugary food and drinks such as juice, honey and glucose.
5. If you are taking other drugs as well, inform your doctor to avoid medicinal interference which affects drug efficacy.

Life Adaptations

1. Stick to your dosing schedule and follow instructions given by your doctor or dietitian to control your diet. Avoid high-calorie and fatty food and do moderate exercise to maintain optimal body weight.
2. Receive regular urine and blood tests as instructed by your doctor to evaluate the progress of your conditions.
3. Maintain personal hygiene to prevent complications such as skin infections.
4. Quit smoking and alcohol.
5. Eat the right amount at regular intervals. Do not delay mealtime.
6. Lead a regular life. Avoid sudden excessive exercise.

Storage of the Drugs

The drugs should be stored in a dry and cool place. Generally, they do not need to be refrigerated unless otherwise stated in the drug labels. Also, they should be stored properly to avoid accidents of mistaken consumption by children.