



You May Be at Risk

You are currently taking a sulfonylurea diabetic medication:

- Chlorpropamide (Diabinese®, Glucamide®)
- Glyburide (DiaBeta®, Glynase® PresTab®, Micronase®)
- Gliclazide (Diamicron®, Diamicron MR®)
- Glimepiride (Amaryl®)

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THIS MEDICATION



QUIZ

Sulfonylureas

1. Sulfonylureas are a type of oral medication commonly used to treat diabetes. They can safely be used in the long term without consequences. **TRUE** **FALSE**
2. Compared to other diabetic medications, sulfonylureas increase the risk of experiencing low blood sugar, which can then cause tremors, sweating, anxiety, dizziness, confusion and fainting. **TRUE** **FALSE**
3. Low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) is associated with memory problems and falls. **TRUE** **FALSE**
4. A sulfonylurea is the best available option to treat my diabetes. **TRUE** **FALSE**



ANSWERS



1. FALSE

Research data shows that patients taking a sulfonylurea to control their diabetes are more at risk of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) than those taking a different medication to control their diabetes. Furthermore, these medications should generally be avoided when treating diabetes in people aged 65 and over, as they increase the risk of experiencing heart problems (example: heart attack).

2. TRUE

Data shows that people who take this medication are more likely to experience hypoglycemia (low blood sugar levels). Hypoglycemia may present as tremors, sweating, anxiety, dizziness, confusion, and fainting.

3. TRUE

Low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) induced by sulfonylureas is associated with memory problems and falls in patients aged 65 and over.

4. FALSE

If you are 65 and older, other antidiabetic medications with fewer side effects may be better suited for you. Discuss your diabetes treatment with a healthcare professional.

DID YOU KNOW?



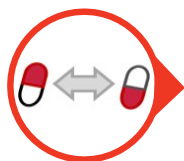
Sulfonylureas are prescribed to treat diabetes. These drugs keep blood glucose (sugar) levels as near to normal as possible.



Patients over the age of 65 who take a sulfonylurea to manage their diabetes are more at risk of experiencing low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) compared to patients taking a different diabetes medication. Sulfonylureas can also cause severe side effects, such as fainting, falling, confusion, heart issues and can even lead to death in certain cases.



Other side effects of sulfonylureas include unexpected tiredness or weakness, involuntary weight gain, yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes, nausea, vomiting, and a loss of appetite. If you have experienced any of the above-mentioned side effects, talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about it.



Sulfonylureas can interact with other medications. Speak with a professional before taking any new medication, including non-prescription products.

ASK YOURSELF:

YES OR NO?

In the last 3 months:

Has your blood sugar level been lower than 4 mmol/l (72 mg/dl)? **Y** **N**

Have you experienced tremors, cold sweats, confusion, headaches or felt tired? **Y** **N**

Did you have nightmares or did you wake up suddenly in the middle of the night for no reason? **Y** **N**

Did you snack regularly to avoid low blood sugar (hypoglycemia)? **Y** **N**

If you answered yes to one or more of these questions, talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Together, you can proceed to re-evaluating your treatment.

AS YOU AGE

As we age, our bodies change, and we become more sensitive to the effects of medications. This puts us at a greater risk of experiencing side effects.

The targets for diabetes control generally become less strict as we grow older. Talk to your healthcare professional about your diabetes targets. This will help you ensure that you reduce the risk of experiencing blood sugar levels that are too low (hypoglycemia).

IDENTIFYING HYPOGLYCEMIA

Drops in blood sugar levels (hypoglycemia) have health consequences. They can affect the brain, as well as psychological and emotional health. People aged 65 and over are at a greater risk of hypoglycemia.

By teaming up with your doctor, nurse and/or pharmacist, you can help prevent episodes of hypoglycemia and know what to do when they occur.

Symptoms of hypoglycemia include:

- Cold or clammy hands
- Shakiness
- Nervousness
- Loss of motor control
- Irritability
- Confusion
- Blurred vision
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Stomach pain
- Fainting or loss of consciousness
- Hunger
- Difficulty concentrating

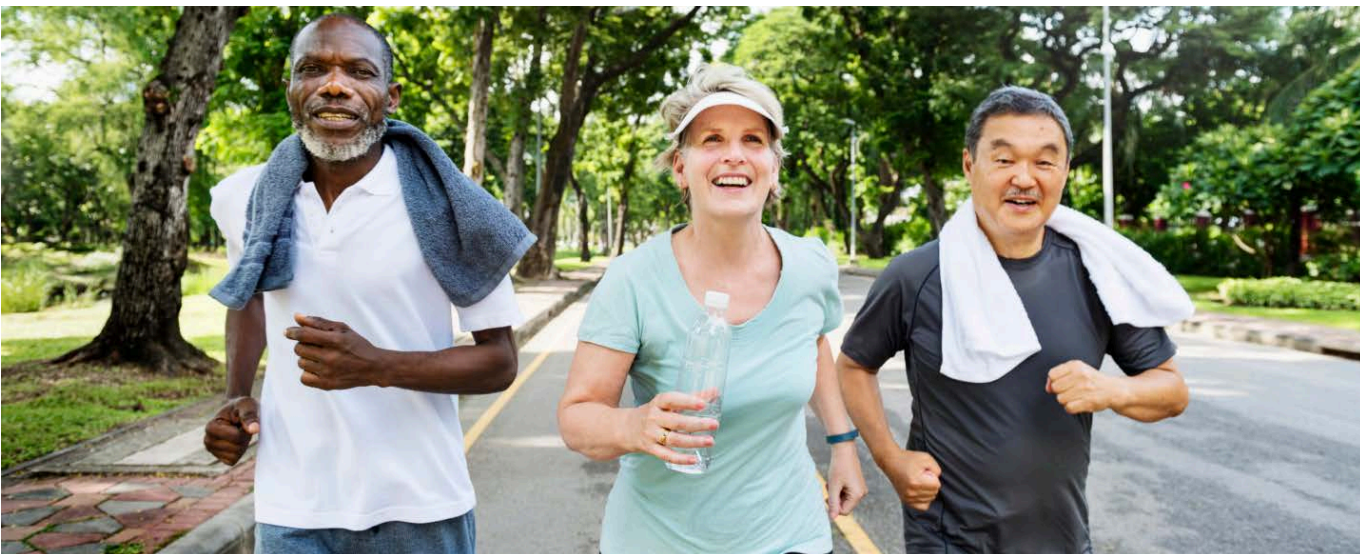


Improve your diabetes control with lifestyle habits

Regular physical activity, a healthy diet, and achieving and maintaining a healthy weight could help control your diabetes. These changes can greatly improve blood sugar control and reduce the risk of other health problems such as heart disease, kidney problems or vision problems.

Here are lifestyle habits that can improve your health:

- Try to do at least 150 minutes of aerobic exercise (walking, cycling, running) per week spread over at least 3 days.
- Try adding 2 sessions of resistance exercise (brief, repetitive exercises with weights, resistance bands, etc.) per week.
- Try to break up periods of sitting by getting up every 20 to 30 minutes.
- Try preparing more meals at home and using fresh, unprocessed ingredients.
- Follow Canada's Food Guide available at <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>. If needed, consult a nutritionist.





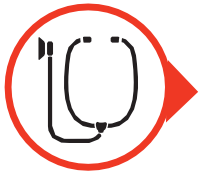
MRS. WHITE'S STORY

“I am 78 years old and have been taking DiaBeta® (glyburide) for 10 years to treat my diabetes. Recently, I had started experiencing dizziness, palpitations and sweats. I checked my blood sugar level: 3.2 mmol/l. I talked about it with my doctor.

My doctor told me that DiaBeta® could increase the risk of low blood sugar levels (hypoglycemia), which can also cause memory problems and falls. He suggested that I stop taking DiaBeta® immediately, which I agreed to do. I continued to take my other diabetes medications. With my pharmacist, I monitored my sugar levels, which have not been too low since.

Not only did my sweating, dizziness, and palpitations disappear, but I was surprised to find that since then, I have been less tired, less anxious, and less irritable. With this boost of energy, I started exercising a little again.

I am happy to be able to count on my different health professionals to age healthily.”



QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

1. Do I need to continue my medication?
2. Can I reduce my dose?
3. Is there an alternative treatment?
4. What symptoms should I look for when I stop my medication?
5. With whom do I follow up with and when?

Please consult your doctor, nurse or pharmacist before stopping any medication.

Other questions I want to ask my health care provider about my medication

Use this space to write down questions you may want to ask:

This brochure can be found online at:

DeprescribingNetwork.ca/useful-resources