

# Lifestyle and metformin for type 2 diabetes

If you have type 2 diabetes, you may need to take medicines in addition to making lifestyle changes, to help keep your blood glucose levels under control. Follow these steps and talk with your health professional to make decisions about your treatment.

## 1 Informing your decision

Blood glucose levels that are consistently above the normal range can cause serious complications: vision loss, kidney disease, foot and leg problems, and an increased risk of stroke and heart disease. It's important to find the best treatment to keep your blood glucose levels within your target range.

For some people with type 2 diabetes, making sufficient lifestyle changes is enough to control blood glucose levels. For others, these changes will not be enough over time and a glucose lowering medicine may need to be considered.

### Comparing your current options

Currently, you have two treatment options:

- ▶ making lifestyle changes, including healthy eating, achieving or maintaining a healthy weight, being physically active, stopping smoking and reducing alcohol use.
- ▶ taking a glucose-lowering medicine, called metformin, **as well as** making these lifestyle changes.

Use the table below to compare the benefits and risks of each treatment option.

LIFESTYLE CHANGES ALONE	METFORMIN AND LIFESTYLE CHANGES
<p><b>What's involved?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Follow the <b>Australian Dietary Guidelines</b> and eat a variety of nutritious foods.</li> <li>▶ Be physically active for at least 30 minutes almost every day.</li> <li>▶ Reach and maintain a healthy body weight.</li> <li>▶ The extent of changes you need to make depends on your current lifestyle and blood glucose levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Metformin is the first prescription medicine most people with type 2 diabetes start taking.</li> <li>▶ Metformin is a tablet you take 1 to 3 times a day.</li> <li>▶ Metformin is a medicine that you will need to take long-term.</li> <li>▶ Continue to make and sustain lifestyle changes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What are the benefits?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Some people with diabetes are able to manage their blood glucose levels with lifestyle changes alone.</li> <li>▶ Lifestyle changes are also good for your overall health and may benefit other health conditions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Metformin is effective in helping people with diabetes manage their blood glucose levels.</li> <li>▶ Metformin has been used for many years so its effects on the body are well understood, it does not cause weight gain and may help weight loss.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What are the risks and common side effects?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Making lifestyle changes can be hard. Your blood glucose may stay too high and you might have to consider starting metformin in the future.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ You may get diarrhoea, heartburn, nausea and stomach pain, especially when you first start taking the medicine. Side effects usually only last a few weeks and can be reduced by taking the medicine with food.</li> </ul>

## 2 Deciding what matters most to you

Respond to the statements below to work out what matters most to you about your current treatment options. These answers can help you prepare for discussions with your health professional.

Tick the box that best describes how you feel.

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
I want to try controlling my blood glucose levels without medicines.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am worried about managing medicine side effects.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am concerned about taking medicines long term.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel confident I can make sufficient lifestyle changes to lower blood glucose levels.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What else matters to you?

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## 3 Do you know enough to make a decision?

Think about the information you have read and talked about with your health professional while considering the questions below.

Do you know enough about the benefits and risks of each option?

Yes  No →

Are you clear about the benefits and risks that matter most to you?

Yes  No →

Do you have enough support and advice to make a decision?

Yes  No →

- ▶ Talk with your diabetes team or other health professionals.
- ▶ Join a support group (in person or online) and talk with others who are taking metformin. They can give you their view on the benefits and risks and tell you about their experience of the medicine.
- ▶ Discuss your options and what matters most to you with a trusted person ( for example a family member or friend).
- ▶ Visit the NPS MedicineWise website [www.nps.org.au/diabetes](http://www.nps.org.au/diabetes) or call Medicines Line on 1300 MEDICINE.
- ▶ Visit the Diabetes Australia website [www.diabetesaustralia.com.au](http://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au) or phone 1300 136 588.

What is your decision?

- Lifestyle changes alone.
- Metformin **as well as** lifestyle changes.

Now that you have followed these steps, speak with your health professional about your treatment decision.