

Sulphonylureas (1 of 1)

What are they?

This term describes a group of drugs commonly used to treat type 2 diabetes. Examples of drugs in this class include: gliclazide (Diamicon), glimepiride (Amaryl), glibenclamide, tolbutamide and glipizide.

When do I take them?

These drugs are taken as tablets between one and three times daily depending on which particular drug is prescribed. They should be taken half an hour before meals in order to give the drug time to boost the levels of insulin ready for the next meal.

What do they do?

They are very effective at lowering blood sugar levels and can be used either on their own or in combination with other tablets or insulin. They are most commonly used in combination with metformin.

These drugs lower blood glucose by causing larger amounts of insulin to be produced and so they are especially useful at limiting the rise in blood glucose during the daytime. Insulin is the hormone that is not working adequately in type 2 diabetes to keep the blood sugar normal and these drugs 'boost' the levels of insulin.

Side Effects

There are few reported side effects with these drugs. The commonest is mild weight gain. Hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar attack) may also occur. This may happen if a meal was later than normal, missed altogether or particularly if excessive exercise or exertion had occurred.

These drugs usually become less effective with time and so it is very likely that the dose will need to be increased progressively.

Further information can be obtained from the leaflet in the box the drug was dispensed in.

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If you need this information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0800 374 208 email: palservice@salisbury.nhs.uk

You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital

We ask for information about you so that you can receive proper care and treatment. This information remains confidential and is stored securely by the Trust in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

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