

Metformin

Metformin is used to treat insulin resistance in patients with prediabetes, type 2 diabetes and polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS).

HOW IT WORKS

Metformin lowers your blood sugar by:

- Decreasing the amount of sugar your liver produces
- Increasing the amount of sugar your muscle cells absorb
- Decreasing your body's need for insulin

Metformin doesn't cause the pancreas to produce more insulin. It should not cause hypoglycemia, otherwise known as low blood sugar, or weight gain, unless it is taken in combination with other medications that do cause these symptoms. Some patients have noticed weight loss after starting this medicine.

OUTCOMES

Medicines that are given for diabetes work best for patients who are active and are making healthy eating choices. Studies have shown that metformin can lower hemoglobin A1C results by 1 to 2 percent.

SIDE EFFECTS

Common

- Temporary nausea and/or diarrhea
- Loss of appetite
- Increased abdominal gas
- Metallic taste

While all medicines have side effects, not all patients feel them. If they do, they are usually able to deal with them. Patients are advised to ask their pharmacist about side effects of every medicine they take; however, side effects are also listed in the information packet that comes with your medicine.

Here are some important things to think about:

- Usually the medicinal benefits are more important than any minor side effects.
- Side effects can go away after taking the medication for a period of time.

Call your doctor if you wonder whether or not you should continue taking the medication if side effects continue to bother you. Your doctor may be able to lower or adjust your dosage or even change your medicine. Never quit taking a medicine until advised to do so by your doctor.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before you begin taking metformin, you should know the dosage is usually increased to help prevent side effects. You may also be advised to take your medicine with a meal to help reduce nausea.

Over time, patients who take metformin can be at risk for a vitamin B12 deficiency, so you may want to speak with your doctor about having your vitamin B12 level checked. Lactic acidosis can occur in patients who have kidney or liver failure, have low levels of oxygen in their blood (hypoxia), abuse alcohol, have a severe infection or are dehydrated. This can also occur when metformin is taken by a patient who is having surgery or an X-ray study that uses dye. Make sure you let all of your doctors know you are taking metformin before any surgery or test involving dyes. You may have to stop taking your medicine temporarily.

Women who have stopped menstruating before they start metformin may begin again and may become pregnant. If you are pregnant, breastfeeding or are planning to become pregnant, do not use any medications unless approved by your doctor. This includes prescription and over-the-counter vitamins, herbs and supplements.

Metformin. (2012, March 31). Retrieved April 27, 2016, from <http://www.drugs.com/metformin.html>