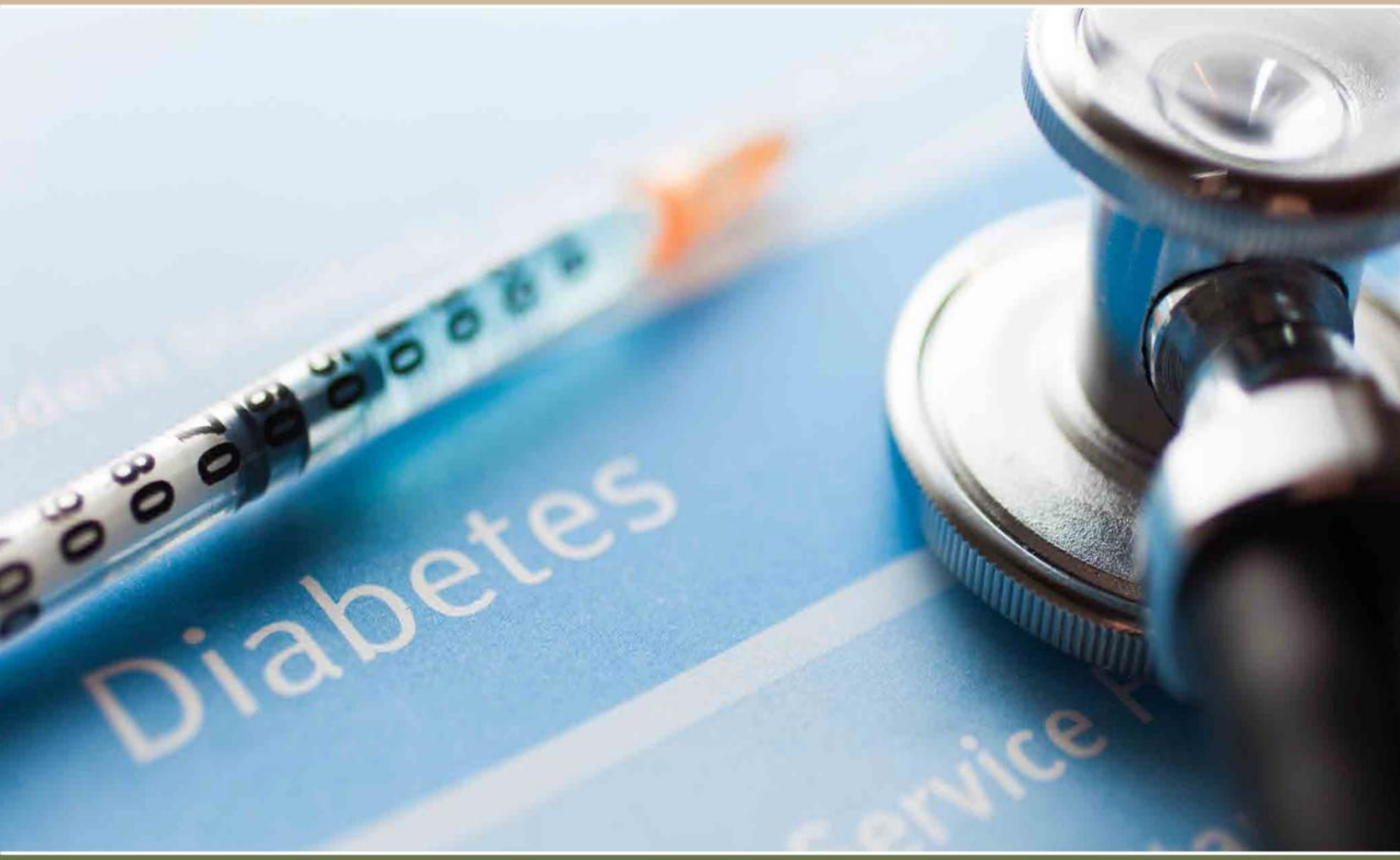
PATIENT HANDBOOK

Updated: August 2026



Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support

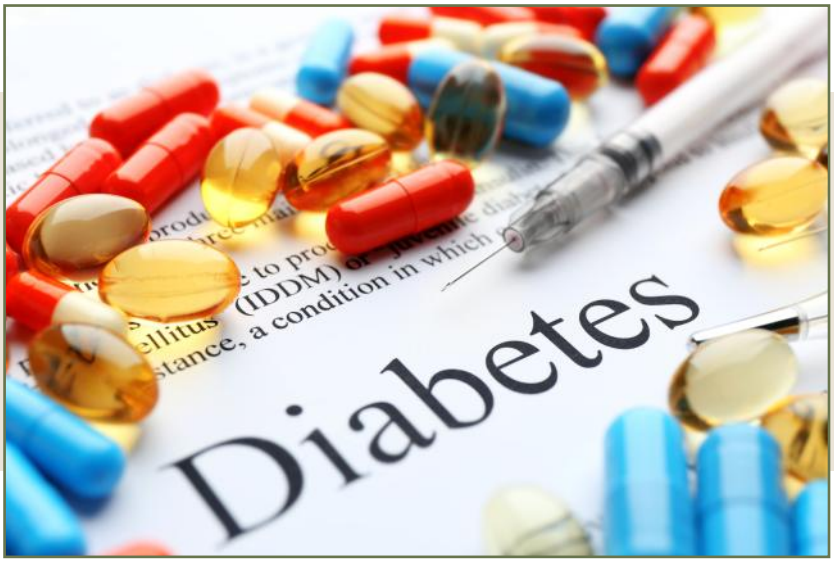
TAKING MEDICATIONS

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Acknowledgment of Support and Disclaimer: This material is based upon work supported by the DoD Information Analysis Center Program Management Office (DoD IAC PMO) and sponsored by the Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC) and the Navy and Marine Corps Force Health Protection Command (NMCFHPC) under Contract No. FA807518D0005-FA807523F0016.

AI-enabled tools were used to assist in the development of select content within this presentation. All outputs were reviewed, validated and approved by the authors prior to use/dissemination.



Welcome to the DHA Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support (DSMES) Program

This program has a core of 8 modules that focus on Type 2 Diabetes with additional modules available for Type 1 and Gestational Diabetes. These are available in-person, virtually and recorded so they are available at your convenience.
warfighterwellness.org/diabetes

All handbooks, contain:

- Reading materials.
- Notetaking pages.
- Glossary.
- Additional resources.

- Diabetes Demystified
- Healthy Coping
- Healthy Eating
- Being Active
- Taking Medications
- Monitoring
- Reducing Risk
- Tools & Solutions

In This Module You Will:

- State medication safety guidelines.
- Identify basic rules for taking medicine safely and list common side effects.
- Recognize how different diabetes medicines help manage blood glucose.
- Name common medicines used for high blood pressure and cholesterol.



Glossary

Basal insulin: Long-acting insulin that mimics the pancreas's steady, baseline release of the hormone. Provides 24-hour background coverage.

Bolus: Fast-acting insulin that is taken right before or after meals to handle sudden spikes in blood sugar from food.

Extended-release: A specially designed pill or capsule that releases active ingredients slowly into the body over several hours. Allows fewer doses.

Insulin: A vital hormone produced in the beta cells of the pancreas that allows glucose to enter the cells for energy.

Interactions: A change in how a drug works in the body because it mixes with another drug , food, drink, supplement or a health condition. Can make the medicine stop working, work too well or cause a bad side effect.

Reabsorption: The biological or physical process of absorbing a substance again.

Health Literacy

Medication literacy means knowing what you are taking, why, what to watch out for and when you should be taking it. Understanding this will encourage correct use and enhance your diabetes self-management.

Language Matters

In this module, we do not place the full names of medications on the slides. The endings of the names are clues as to what class that medication belongs to and how it will work inside the body. We do place them here in the patient handbook so you can look up your medication names.

Medication Safety

When increasing your medication literacy, one of the first considerations should always be safety.

What are you taking? Your current list should include all medications, supplements, dosage and schedule.

Do **NOT** stop medications without talking to your clinician.

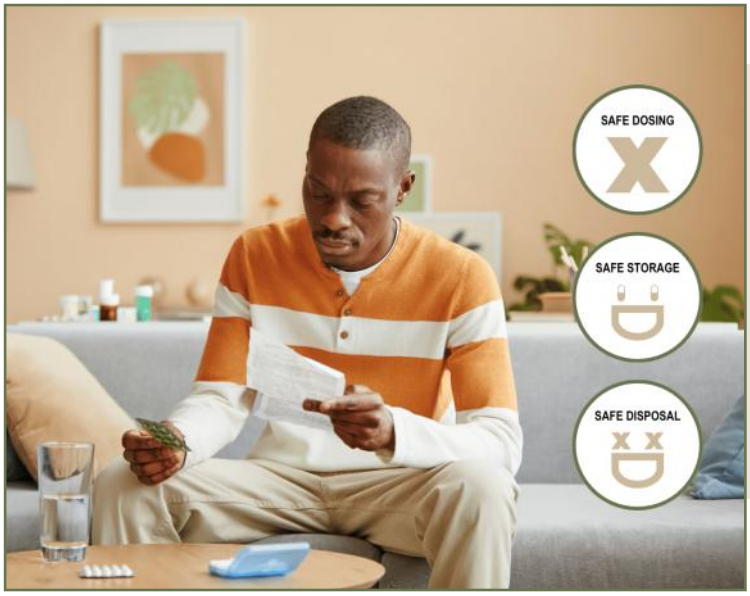
Check Medication Insert or Ask a Pharmacist About:

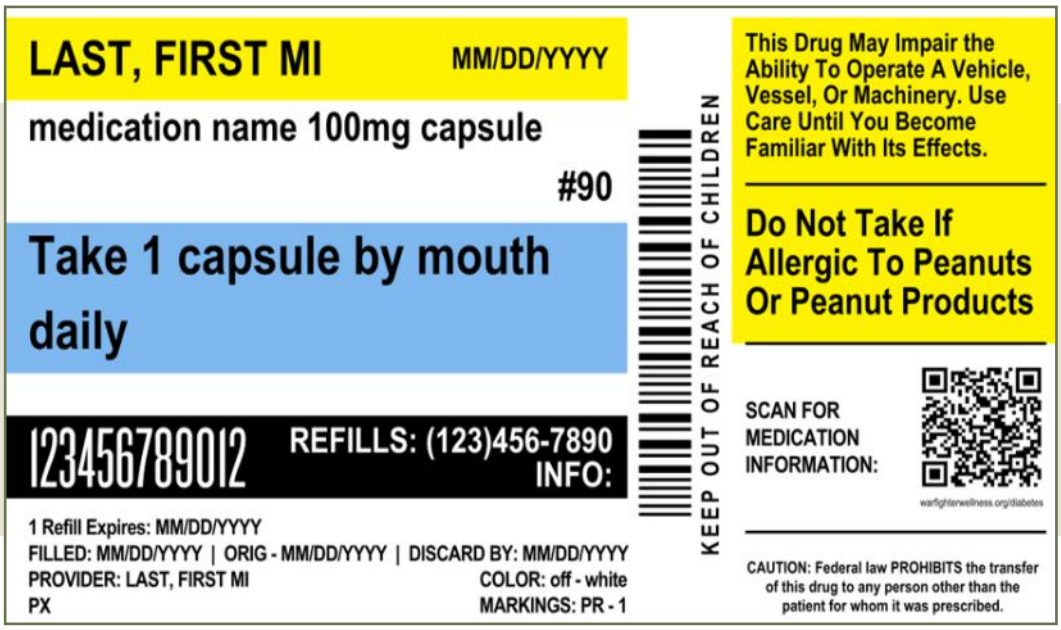
Medications have inserts with important information. Many also have websites with videos on how to use the product and frequently asked questions. Talking to your local Pharmacist is another great resource. Consider checking the following information for each medication:

- How to store your medication properly.
- Potential side effects.
- Possible drug or food interactions.
- When medications expire.
- What to do if you miss a dose.

Local Sharps Disposal Information at:

https://safeneedledisposal.org/





How to Read a Pharmacy Label

- **Instructions:** How the medication should be taken.
- **Medication name and strength:** Generic name, sometimes common name too, and dose in each item.
- **Quantity and refills:** Number included and how many refills are left.
- **Dates:** When the refill expires (usually a year from clinician prescribed), when it was filled and when the items should be disposed of.
- **Safety:** Specific warnings in case of allergies or possible impairments.
- **RX number:** Prescription number to use for refills or questions.
- **Refill phone number:** Number to call to request refills.

Name of Medication I Am On	Dose	Instructions	Warnings

Medication Notes

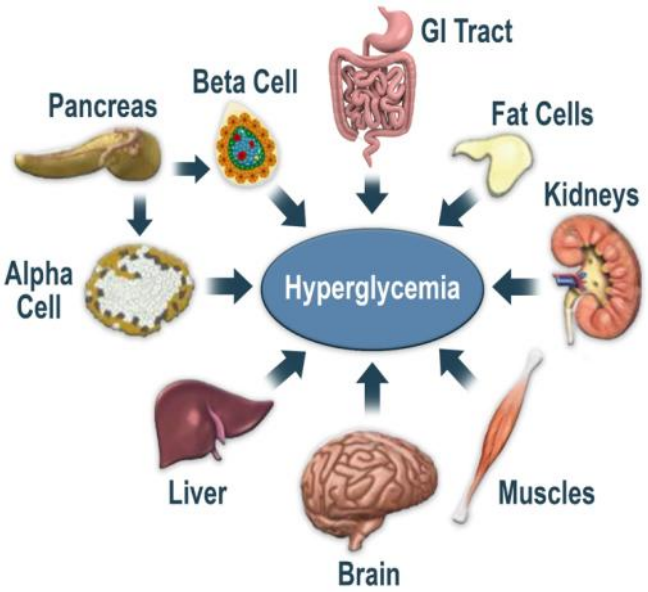
What medications are you taking?
What questions do you have?



Name of Medication I Am On	Dose	Instructions	Warnings

Medication Introduction

Medications work in many ways to lower glucose. Each medication works on different areas in the body that are effected by diabetes glucose metabolism changes. Sometimes it takes a few different medications be successful.



Different Types:

- Oral.
- Injectable.
    - Insulin.
    - Non-insulin.

Medications work best with a diabetes-friendly lifestyle.

Biguanide (Metformin)

Metformin was historically the first medication used when someone was diagnosed with diabetes. This slows the glucose released from the liver. It also makes tissue more sensitive to insulin. It may reduce cardiac risks.

Tips
Take with a full meal to reduce side effects.
Extended-release tablets are an option.
Begin with a lower dose and increase slowly to
Talk to clinician if having a test with contrast

Side Effects
Nausea
Gas
Diarrhea

Sulfonylureas "-ides"

Helps the pancreas release more insulin at meal times and lowers after-meal glucose.

Type: Tablet.
Works on: Beta cells in the pancreas.

Med Names	Common Name
Glyburide	Diabeta
Glipizide	Glucatrol
Glimepiride	Amaryl

Tips
Take up to 30 minutes before eating.
Check what to do if you miss a meal.
Do **NOT** take at bedtime.

Side Effects
Hypoglycemia (low blood glucose)
Weight gain.

Incretins: DPP4 Inhibitors "-gliptins"

Dipeptidyl peptidase-4 inhibitors.
Increases insulin production when food is in the stomach. It helps with mealtime glucose and decreases glucagon.

Type: Tablet, film-coated
Works on: both alpha and beta cells in pancreas, and GI tract.

Med Names	Common Name
Sitagliptin	Januvia
Linagliptin	Tradjenta
Saxagliptin	Onglyza
Alogliptin	Nesina

Tips
May be taken with or without food.
Safe to use in combination with other medications.
Considered weight neutral.

Side Effects (Rare)
Joint Pain.
Flu-like symptoms.
Skin reaction/rash.
Nausea/diarrhea.

SGLT2 Inhibitors "-flozins"

Sodium-Glucose Cotransporter-2 inhibitors. Decreases reabsorption of glucose from the kidney. Increases glucose in the urine. Protects the heart and kidney.

Type: Tablet.
Works on: Kidneys to allow glucose to leave the body.

Med Names	Common Name
Empagliflozin	Jardiance
Dapagliflozin	Farxiga
Canagliflozin	Invokana
Ertugliflozin	Steglatro

Tips
Proper peri care to avoid risk of infection.
Drink plenty of water.
Avoid extremely low carbohydrate lifestyles.

Side Effects
Urinary tract/yeast infections.
Weight loss.
Lowers blood pressure.
Increased urination.

Incretins: GLP-1 Agonists "-tides"

Glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonists. Tells the pancreas to release more insulin when glucoses rise. Slows gastric emptying. Lowers appetite.

Type: Injection.
Works on: Pancreas, both alpha and beta cells. GI tract, liver and brain.

Med Names	Common Name
Exenatide	Byetta
Liraglutide	Victoza
Dulaglutide	Trulicity
Semaglutide	Ozempic
Tirzepatide	Mounjaro

Tips
Stop eating when full.
May not feel well first 2-3 days.
Prioritize protein, fiber and water.

Side Effects
Nausea, vomiting, constipation.
Weight loss.
Injection site redness or pain.

Thiazolidindiones "-zone"

Also known as TZD's.
Makes tissues more sensitive to insulin.
Moves glucose out of the blood to be used by the cells.

Med Names	Common Name
Pioglitazone	Actos
Rosiglitazone	Avandia

Type: Tablet.
Works on: Muscle cells more sensitive.

Tips
May benefit those with Metabolic Dysfunction Associated Steatotic Liver disease (MASLD).
May take up to 12 weeks to see glucose decreases.
NOT recommended for those with cirrhosis or congestive heart failure due to fluid retention.

Side Effects
Swelling of legs, edema.
Fluid weight gain.
Risk of bone fracture

Alpha Glucosidase Inhibitors

Slows down how fast carbs are digested and prevents glucose spikes

Med Names	Common Name
Acarbose	Precose
Miglitol	Glyset

Type: Tablet.
Works on: GI tract.

Tips
Take with first bite of a meal.

Side Effects
Gas.
Stomach upset/diarrhea.

Safe Medicine Storage

- Heat, moisture and direct sunlight can break down the active ingredients.
  - Keep them at room temperature.
  - Do NOT keep medicines in the bathroom. Steam from the shower can degrade oral and injectables.
  - Keep pills in their original bottles inside a dark cabinet.
- Some medicines require refrigeration (unopened GLP-1 and insulin products) to stay fresh. Do NOT freeze.
- Always store medicines high up and locked away so children and pets cannot accidentally ingest them.
- Medicines expire. They may not be effective or can make you sick.
- To dispose of expired medicines: place in blue box in pharmacy or discard with used cat litter/coffee grounds.





Prediabetes

- Weight reduction and maintenance is the best way to prevent the progression to type 2 diabetes.
- Request appointment with Diabetes Care and Education Specialist or Registered Dietitian/Nutritionist.
- Get 150 minutes or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week.

Medications approved:

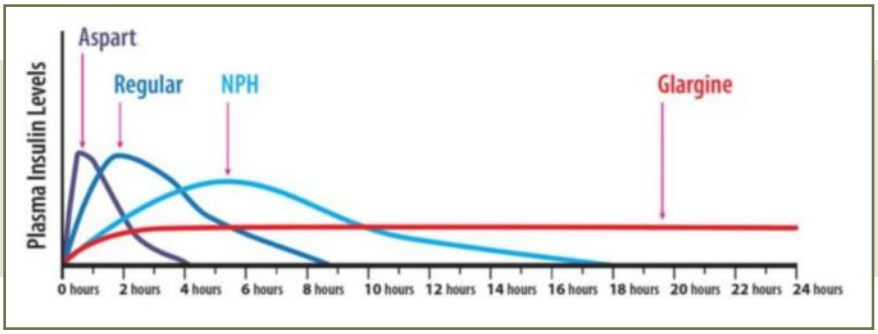
- Metformin.
- Pioglitazone.
- Acarbose.
- Liraglutide.

Insulin

Basal insulin is the background insulin the body naturally makes and releases on a daily basis.

Bolus insulin (Aspart, Regular) lowers the glucose levels associated with meals.

NPH is a combination of both of the above.

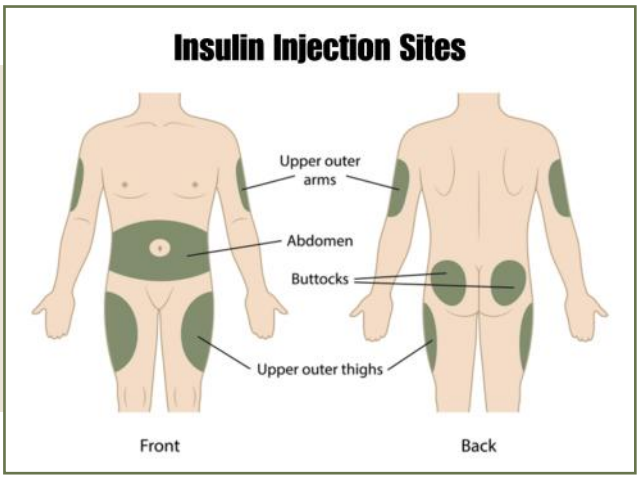












Insulin Tips

Storing Insulin (check package):

- Refrigerate before opening.
- Can be stored at room temperature once open for 28-56 days depending on brand. Check label.
- Avoid extreme temperatures. DO NOT FREEZE!
- Don’t use beyond expiration date.

Injecting insulin: Rotate injection sites.

In case of emergency: Vials of several insulins and supplies can be purchased over the counter at certain retail stores.

Blood Pressure Medications

ACE Inhibitors and ARBs.
Angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors "-pril".
Angiotensin II receptor blockers "-sartan".

Primary blood pressure medications for those on diabetes. Blocks chemicals that make blood vessel tighten. Protects kidneys.

Type: Tablet.

Med Names	Common Name
Lisinopril	Prinivil
Benazepril	Lotensin
Losartan	Cozaar
Valsartan	Diovan

Tips
Can take with or without food.

Side Effects
High Potassium levels.
Persistent dry cough (ACE).
NOT for pregnancy.

Cholesterol Medications "-statins"

These reduce low density lipoprotein (LDL), which prevents blocked vessels. PRIMARY PREVENTION for those at high risk of heart disease or stroke.

Type: Tablet.

Med Names	Common Name
Atorvastatin	Lipitor
Rosuvastatin	Crestor
Simvastatin	Zocor
Pravastatin	Pravochol
Lovastatin	Mevacor

Tips
Liver function test when start, 3 months and annually.
Avoid grapefruit as it can block metabolism and create build up in the body.
Best taken at night when cholesterol is created in the liver.

Side Effects
Muscle pain.
Discontinue if pregnant.

Key Points

- Keep a list of all current medications including the doses and the time to take them.
- Remember to properly store and dispose of your medications.
- Your healthcare team will work with you to determine the type, timing and doses for your medications.
- Be aware of potential side effects and discuss with your provider if you are having any symptoms.
- Monitoring blood glucose, blood pressure and weight can help evaluate the effectiveness of some medications.
- Beware of potential side effects and discuss with your provider if you are having any symptoms.
- Monitoring blood glucose, blood pressure and weight can help evaluate the effectiveness of some medications.
- Ask your healthcare team if you have questions.

Notes:

Resources

- Diabetes Demystified
- Healthy Coping
- Healthy Eating
- Being Active
- Taking Medications
- Monitoring
- Reducing Risk
- Tools & Solutions

Core DSMES Sessions:

These core sessions contain vital information toward understanding how diabetes effects the body and all the recommended health behaviors to support self-management.

Link to recorded classes:
warfighterwellness.org/diabetes

Online:

American Diabetes Association: https://diabetes.org/health-wellness/medication/oral-other-injectable-diabetes-medications

Center for Disease Control and Prevention: https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/articles/diabetes-and-your-medicines.html

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases: https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes/overview/insulin-medicines-treatments

Medline Plus: https://medlineplus.gov/diabetesmedicines.html

Notes:

American Diabetes Association®
Education Recognition Program

The American Diabetes Association Recognizes this education service as meeting the National Standards for Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support.

If you have any concerns about the diabetes education you receive:

Please call
1-888-232-0822

or

write
American Diabetes Association
Director, Education Recognition Program
2451 Crystal Drive, Suite 900
Arlington, VA 22202

Refer to 006585