

Gliclazide tablets for steroid induced diabetes

You have been prescribed gliclazide tablets to help with high blood sugar readings caused by steroid tablets (e.g. prednisolone, dexamethasone). Gliclazide tablets reduce the risk of you developing problems with a high blood sugar.

The dose of the gliclazide tablets may need adjusting depending on:

- How well you respond to the gliclazide tablets
- The dose of the steroid tablets you are taking. Lower doses of steroid may require lower doses of gliclazide.
- How much you are eating. Eating more sugar or starchy foods (bread/pasta/potato/rice) will increase your blood sugar levels and may require a higher dose of gliclazide tablets.
- If you are vomiting or eating less you may be at risk of low blood sugar levels and the dose of gliclazide may need reducing or stopping.
- Drinking alcohol. Alcohol may cause your blood sugar level to fall too low. If you drink alcohol regularly please tell your doctor as they may suggest a lower dose of gliclazide tablets.

What should my blood glucose be?

We usually recommend aiming for a blood sugar level between 6 and 12 mmol/L. In some patients we may recommend a wider range of 6 to 16 mmol/L if there is a concern about low blood sugar levels. Your doctor or nurse should tell you your target range.

If your blood sugar level is too high you may need a higher dose of gliclazide.

If your blood sugar level is too low you may need a lower dose of gliclazide, or the tablets may be stopped.

Timing of the effect of steroid tablets on your blood sugar level

High blood sugar levels caused by steroid tablets usually increases your blood sugar levels in the afternoon and evening. You may find your blood sugar levels in the morning are normal. We usually advise taking the gliclazide tablets earlier in the day to prevent your blood sugar level climbing.

We recommend checking your blood sugar levels before breakfast and before your evening meal.

Reducing the dose of your steroid tablets

If your doctor recommends reducing the dose of steroid tablets you may need less gliclazide. We recommend reducing the dose of gliclazide by 40mg every time the prednisolone dose reduces by 5mg. Your doctor or diabetes nurse can help to give advice.

If you have a blood sugar level under 6mmol/L in the evening, we would recommend the dose of gliclazide is reduced or stopped.

Having a low blood sugar level 'hypo'

Too much gliclazide or not eating enough could result in your blood sugar dropping too low. This may cause you to develop symptoms such as

- Feeling hungry
- Sweating
- Blurred vision
- Feeling shaky

If you develop these symptoms you should check your blood glucose level. If your blood sugar level is under 5mmol/L we would recommend treatment to increase your blood sugar level. Appropriate treatment would be

- 100mL of fresh orange juice
- 4-5 glucose tablets or jelly babies

You should then eat 2 biscuits or a sandwich to reduce the risk of your blood sugar falling again. You should check your blood sugar after 15minutes to make sure it is increasing, if it is not the treatment will need repeating.

If you have a low blood sugar level your gliclazide tablet dose will need reducing. Please contact your doctor or diabetes nurse if this occurs.

What happens if my blood sugar level is high even on gliclazide tablets?

If the dose of gliclazide cannot be increased further and your blood sugar is still high you may need to start some insulin treatment. Your doctor will contact the diabetes team if this is the case.

Driving

Gliclazide can sometimes reduce your blood sugar level so that it would be dangerous to drive. We would recommend checking your blood sugar level before you drive to make sure the reading is above 5mmol/L.

If your blood sugar reading is under 5mmol/L you should treat the low blood sugar and wait 45 minutes. If your blood sugar is over 5mmol/L you can then drive. You should check your blood sugar level every 2 hours on long journeys.

You do not usually need to tell the DVLA you are taking gliclazide tablets but if you are not sure please ask your doctor.

Do I have diabetes?

Your doctor will have done a test to see if you had diabetes before starting the steroid tablets.

If you have diabetes you may need to continue with treatment for diabetes or make changes to your diet, even if your steroid tablets stop.

If you did not have diabetes before starting the steroid tablets, your risk of diabetes in the future is higher and we would recommend a blood test (HbA1c) every year to screen for this.

Who can I contact for help?

You should speak to the doctor who prescribed your steroid tablets for help. They may suggest you speak to the hospital diabetes nurses.

Doctor's contact number

RIE diabetes nurses 0131 242 1471

WGH diabetes nurses 0131 537 1746

SJH diabetes nurses 01506 523856