

3.17 Care of People with Metabolic Problems - Type 2 diabetes mellitus

Max, 53, has type 2 diabetes that was diagnosed 3 months ago. You see him in the surgery with the results of his latest HbA1c (60 mmol/mol). His blood pressure is well controlled and he is already on a statin.

Elicit: We have the average sugar results from the last 3 months. How is it all going?

Max: I've been doing my best doctor. But with what's going on with my family at the moment, I just can't shift the weight.

Provide: Unfortunately, your blood tests show that, despite your efforts with diet and exercise, your sugar levels are still not as well controlled as we'd like them to be. At this stage we would normally recommend trying some medicines.

Elicit: Is that OK?

Max: Sure.

The first medicine we usually start is called metformin. It's a particularly useful tablet if you've found it difficult to get your weight down, as it may help you to do this. It's also good because it doesn't cause hypoglycaemia (it doesn't drop the blood sugar *too* low). But it can cause side effects: often a slight loss of appetite and maybe slightly loose bowels. By starting it slowly and increasing it over a few months, these side effects shouldn't be a problem. Let's start with one tablet with your main meal and we'll talk again in a couple of weeks.