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2. Acarbose

# Acarbose

**Generic name:** acarbose [ *ah-KAR-bose* ]**Brand name:** [Precose](#)**Dosage form:** oral tablet (100 mg; 25 mg; 50 mg)**Drug class:** [Alpha-glucosidase inhibitors](#)[Medically reviewed](#) by Drugs.com on Apr 9, 2024. Written by [Cerner Multum](#).[Uses](#) [Side effects](#) [Warnings](#) [Before taking](#) [Dosage](#) [Interactions](#)

## What is acarbose?

Acarbose slows the digestion of carbohydrates in the body, which helps control blood sugar levels.

Acarbose is used together with diet and exercise to treat [type 2 diabetes](#). Acarbose is sometimes used in combination with insulin or other diabetes medications you take by mouth.

Acarbose may also be used for purposes not listed in this medication guide.

## Acarbose side effects

Get emergency medical help if you have **signs of an allergic reaction**: hives; difficulty breathing; swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat.

**Acarbose may cause serious side effects. Call your doctor at once if you have:**

- severe [constipation](#);
- severe stomach pain, diarrhea that is watery or bloody;
- easy bruising, unusual bleeding (nose, mouth, vagina, or rectum), purple or red pinpoint spots under your skin; or
- **liver problems**--nausea, upper stomach pain, itching, tired feeling, loss of appetite, dark urine, clay-colored stools, jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes).

**Common side effects of acarbose may include:**

- stomach discomfort, gas, bloating;
- mild diarrhea; or
- mild skin rash or itching.

This is not a complete list of side effects and others may occur. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

 [Acarbose side effects](#) (more detail)

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## Warnings

You should not use acarbose if you have [inflammatory bowel disease](#), an ulcer or blockage in your intestines, or cirrhosis of the liver. Do not use acarbose if you are in a state of [diabetic ketoacidosis](#) (call your doctor for treatment with insulin).

## Before taking this medicine

You should not use acarbose if you are allergic to it, or if you have:

- inflammatory bowel disease;
- a blockage in your intestines;
- a digestive disorder affecting your intestines;
- intestinal ulcer (of your colon);
- cirrhosis of the liver; or
- diabetic ketoacidosis (call your doctor for treatment with insulin).

To make sure acarbose is safe for you, tell your doctor if you have:

- [liver disease](#);
- kidney disease;

- a bowel or intestinal disorder; or
- a stomach disorder.

acarbose is not expected to harm an unborn baby. Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.

It is not known whether acarbose passes into breast milk or if it could harm a nursing baby. You should not breast-feed while you are using acarbose.

Acarbose is not approved for use by anyone younger than 18 years old.

## How should I take acarbose?

Follow all directions on your prescription label. Do not take this medicine in larger or smaller amounts or for longer than recommended.

**Take acarbose with the first bite of a main meal**, unless your doctor tells you otherwise.

Your blood sugar will need to be checked often, and you may need other blood tests at your doctor's office.

If you take acarbose with insulin or other diabetes medications, your blood sugar could get too low.

**Low blood sugar (hypoglycemia)** can happen to everyone who has diabetes. Symptoms include headache, hunger, sweating, confusion, irritability, dizziness, or feeling shaky. Always keep a source of dextrose (D-glucose) with you in case you have low blood sugar. When taking acarbose, dextrose will work better than cane sugar or table sugar in treating **hypoglycemia**. Sources of dextrose include honey, dates, raisins, plums, dried prunes, grapes, or glucose tablets. Be sure your family and close friends know how to help you in an emergency.

If you have severe hypoglycemia and cannot eat or drink, use a glucagon injection. Your doctor can prescribe a glucagon emergency injection kit and tell you how to use it.

Also watch for signs of **high blood sugar (hyperglycemia)** such as increased thirst, increased urination, hunger, dry mouth, fruity breath odor, **drowsiness**, dry skin, blurred vision, and **weight loss**.

Check your blood sugar carefully during times of stress, travel, illness, surgery or medical emergency, vigorous exercise, or if you drink alcohol or skip meals. These things can affect your glucose levels and your dose needs may also change.

**Do not change your medication dose or schedule without your doctor's advice.**

Acarbose is only part of a complete treatment program that may also include diet, exercise, weight control, regular blood sugar testing, and special medical care. Follow your doctor's instructions very closely.

Store at room temperature away from moisture and heat. Keep the bottle tightly closed when not in use.

## Acarbose dosing information

### Usual Adult Dose for Diabetes Type 2:

Individualize dose based on efficacy and tolerability:

Initial dose: 25 mg orally 3 times a day

-Adjust dose at 4 to 8 week intervals based on efficacy and tolerability

Maintenance dose: 50 mg to 100 mg orally 3 times a day

Maximum dose: Weight 60 kg or less: 50 mg orally 3 times a day; Weight greater than 60 kg: 100 mg orally 3 times a day

Comments:

-Take at the start (with first bite) of each main meal; patients should be adhering to a diabetic diet to minimize GI side effects.

-Some patients benefit from starting at 25 mg orally once a day with subsequent titration to 3 times a day to minimize GI side effects.

-If no further reduction in postprandial glucose or HbA1c is observed with titration to 100 mg three times a day, consider lowering the dose.

Use: As an adjunct to diet and exercise to improve glycemic control in patients with type 2 [diabetes mellitus](#).

 [Detailed Acarbose dosage information](#)

## What happens if I miss a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember (be sure to take it with a meal). If it has been longer than 15 minutes since you started your meal, you may still take acarbose but it may be less effective than taking it with the first bite of the meal. **Do not** take acarbose between meals, and do not take extra medicine to make up a missed dose.

## What happens if I overdose?

Seek emergency medical attention or call the Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222.

**In case of overdose, do not eat or drink anything containing carbohydrates for the next 4 to 6 hours.**

## What should I avoid while taking acarbose?

Avoid drinking alcohol. It can lower your blood sugar.

Avoid taking a digestive enzyme such as [pancreatin](#), amylase, or lipase at the same time you take acarbose. These enzymes can make it harder for your body to absorb acarbose. Products that contain [digestive enzymes](#) include Arco-Lase, Cotazym, Donnazyme, Pancrease, Creon, and Ku-Zyme.

## What other drugs will affect acarbose?

You may be more likely to have [hyperglycemia](#) (high blood sugar) if you take acarbose with other drugs that can raise blood sugar, such as:

- isoniazid (for treating [tuberculosis](#));
- niacin (Advicor, Niaspan, Niacor, Simcor, Slo Niacin, and others), nicotine patches or gum;
- [birth control pills](#) and other hormones;
- a diuretic or "water pill";
- heart or blood pressure medicine;
- insulin or oral diabetes medicine;

- diet pills, stimulants, or medicines to treat asthma, colds or allergies;
- phenothiazines (Compazine and others);
- seizure medications (Dilantin and others);
- steroids ([prednisone](#) and others); or
- thyroid medicine (Synthroid and others).

This list is not complete. Other drugs may interact with acarbose, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and [herbal products](#). Not all possible interactions are listed in this medication guide.

**i** [Acarbose drug interactions](#) (more detail)

## Does acarbose interact with my other drugs?

Enter medications to view a detailed interaction report using our [Drug Interaction Checker](#).

acarbose

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- [Acarbose advanced reading](#)

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- [Acarbose monograph](#)
- [Acarbose \(FDA\)](#)

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# Related treatment guides

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# Further information

Remember, keep this and all other medicines out of the reach of children, never share your medicines with others, and use this medication only for the indication prescribed.

Always consult your healthcare provider to ensure the information displayed on this page applies to your personal circumstances.

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## DRUG STATUS

Availability	
Rx	Prescription only
Pregnancy & Lactation	
	Risk data available
CSA Schedule*	
N/A	Not a controlled drug
Approval History	
	Drug history at FDA

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