



## What's my Drug?

**Metformin** is a biguanide drug mainly used to treat diabetes. It works by helping your body's insulin work better.

**How to take it:** Take it with or just after food. Swallow it whole. Do not chew it.

**Possible side effects include:** Feeling sick, diarrhoea and tummy pain. Some people notice their sense of taste changes. It could reduce your appetite. When used on its own it does not cause hypos (when blood sugar levels go too low). This medicine can cause the levels of vitamin B12 to run low. B12 replacement treatment can correct this problem. Low B12 levels can cause anaemia and nerve damage. Ask your doctor about this.

**Rare but important side effects:** An uncommon but important complication is lactic acidosis. This is a severe disturbance of the body's chemistry. It can be caused by a number of things e.g. sickness, diarrhoea, fever, certain drugs or if your kidneys stop working so well. Prolonged fasting and excess alcohol are two other causes. Lactic acidosis can cause breathing problems, tummy pains, drowsiness and even coma. Contact your health professional if you become unwell when taking this medicine.

**Warnings and Cautions:** You should not take this medicine if you are at risk of dehydration e.g. sickness or diarrhoea. Just stop taking it until you are better. The closer you stick to your diet the better this medicine works. This medicine does not mix well with a number of other medicines, e.g. NSAID-type painkillers like ibuprofen. Check with your health professional if necessary. Stop metformin if you have to have an iodine injection X-ray or if you are due to have an operation involving anaesthetics. It is not advisable to drink alcohol while on this medication. To find out more about this medicine's other possible side effects, read the full Product Information Leaflet. For women: It is thought that this medicine is safe to use during pregnancy or breastfeeding if it is needed. You should discuss this with your doctor first if necessary.