

## METFORMIN EXTENDED RELEASE

### Why has metformin extended release (XR or ER) been recommended for you?

Metformin XR (also called Glumetza®) is being prescribed to you to help manage your blood glucose levels.

### What is metformin XR and how does it work?

Metformin is an oral diabetes medication that belongs to a class of drugs called biguanides. This type of medication works by dissolving slowly in the stomach, and the medication can thus be taken once a day. Metformin works to improve blood glucose levels through improving the body's sensitivity to insulin, decreasing glucose production from the liver, and by decreasing absorption of glucose by the intestine.

### What do we expect when starting metformin XR?

- A potential side effect from metformin XR is an upset stomach or other gastrointestinal symptoms, such as cramping, tummy pain, nausea, gas, diarrhea, and/or vomiting. These can occur when starting metformin XR OR after increasing your dose. However, this tends to occur less frequently than with regular metformin tablets.
- You may feel less hungry.
- You may experience low blood sugar (hypoglycemia).

### If you are having nausea and gastrointestinal symptoms:

- Take metformin with food to help decrease the nausea.
- Cut back on very spicy and fried or high-fat foods.
- Eat smaller, more frequent meals.

### How do you start taking metformin XR?

- Start with 500 mg (one tablet) once in the evening, taken with your dinner.
- Your doctor may direct you increase the dose by 500 mg every 1 to 2 weeks.
- The tablet must be swallowed whole, and it **cannot be crushed, cut or chewed**.

**How to be successful with metformin XR:**

- Take your medication each day as prescribed.
- Continue to watch what and how much you eat:
  - Do not skip meals.
  - Limit juice, pop, bubble tea, chocolate milk, iced tea, or other sweetened beverages.
  - Try to include a fruit and/or a vegetable in each meal.
- Move your body by walking, taking the stairs, biking, or participating in a sport or activity that you like! Try to aim for a goal of 45 to 60 minutes of body movement per day.
- Maintain a healthy sleep routine with 7-9 hours sleep/night for children 12 years and older.

**Do not take metformin XR if you:**

- Are very dehydrated (illness with severe vomiting or diarrhea).
- Are going for imaging (CT scan or MRI) with injection of dyes (contrast agents).
- Are going for surgery.
- Have consumed a lot of **alcohol**, as this can increase the effect of metformin and can keep blood glucose levels lower for prolonged periods of time, potentially causing hypoglycemia. To prevent low blood glucose, always be sure to have snacks when drinking alcohol (also see [Diabetes and Alcohol](#) handout).

**When to contact the Diabetes Team at [dcnurse@cw.bc.ca](mailto:dcnurse@cw.bc.ca) OR phone 604-875-2868:**

- If you are having lethargy, myalgia (severe muscle pain), severe abdominal pain or are unable to tolerate the tablet.
- If you are having frequent low blood sugars (hypoglycemia)