

What to Know

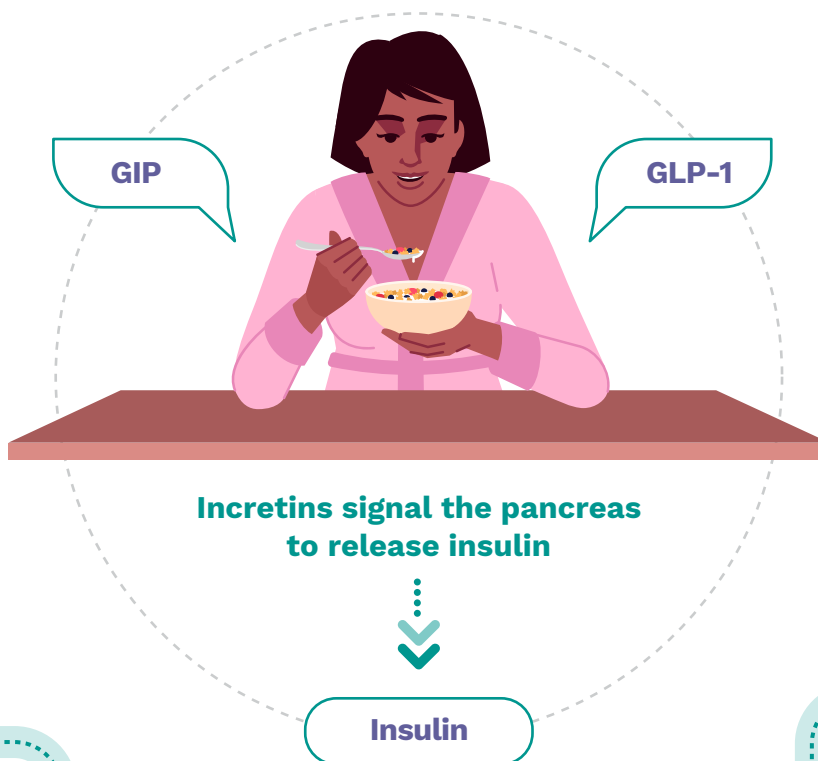
About Medicines That Work Like Incretins in the Gut to Treat Type 2 Diabetes

Medicines that work like incretins are a newer option for type 2 diabetes treatment. They are approved to lower blood sugar and can also help with other related complications.

1 What Are Incretins?

The food we eat eventually turns into sugar. Without insulin, the sugar would stay in the blood and the body can't use it for energy.

When we eat food, the gut tells an organ in the body called the pancreas to release insulin. This is done in part by 2 messengers called glucose-dependent insulintropic polypeptide (GIP) and glucagon-like peptide 1 (GLP-1). These messengers are called incretins.



2 Tale of Two Incretins:

In the early 1900s, researchers first thought there must be a way for the gut to communicate with the pancreas. It wasn't until the 1970s that this messenger was discovered. This messenger was called GIP.

It took another 10 years before the next such messenger, GLP-1 was discovered in the 1980s. GLP-1 and GIP work together to tell the pancreas to release insulin after we eat food.

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Incretins and Type 2 Diabetes:

Once the 2 incretins were found, the link to their role in type 2 diabetes was found shortly afterwards. In people with type 2 diabetes, the incretin signals between the gut and the pancreas don't work the way they should. This made researchers start thinking of medicines that could help fix this problem.

The first of these was approved in the USA in 2005. Since then, a number of others have been approved. These medicines can be taken by mouth or as an injection. Ask your health care team for more information about the different options.



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What Do Medicines That Work Like Incretins Do?

They work to help improve blood sugar in people with type 2 diabetes in part by:



Slowing how quickly food leaves the stomach, which can then help slow down how quickly sugar gets into the bloodstream



Helping cells better respond to insulin made by the pancreas to take up sugar from the blood



Helping the pancreas release more insulin after you eat



Decreasing food intake



Helping lower sugar released by the liver

Not only do these medications lower blood sugar for people with type 2 diabetes, but some can also help lower the risk of cardiovascular diseases such as heart attack and stroke in people with type 2 diabetes.