

Exenatide: What I Need to Know

How is it given?

- Given as an injection once a week

How do I give the injection?

- Exenatide comes in a “pen” form. Add a needle to the pen to give the injection.
- Given under the skin (subcutaneously) similar to insulin

How is it usually dosed?

- 2 mg injection once a week

How does it work?

- Belongs to a class of medications called GLP-1 agonists (glucagon-like peptide 1 receptor agonists).
- Exenatide helps bring blood sugars into a normal range by slowing down digestion, increasing your body’s release of insulin when eating, making your body feel full faster, and decreasing the amount of sugar released from the liver.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- If it is 3 or more days to your next dose give the dose when you think of it. Otherwise skip the dose and go back to your normal schedule.
- Do NOT take 2 doses at once

What are common side effects?

- Diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, weight loss, injection site pain or reaction

What helps decrease side effects?

- Eating smaller meals

What are the potential serious side effects?

- Pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas)
- Gallbladder disease
- Low blood sugars (if taking another medication like insulin that can lower blood sugar)
- Kidney injury in the setting of dehydration
- Low platelet levels (leading to bleeding)
- Allergic reactions

When should I call my doctor?

- If you have severe abdominal pain or vomiting (which are potential signs of pancreatitis or gallbladder disease)
- Increased low blood sugars
- Unexplained bleeding and/or bruising
- Dizziness or passing out
- Signs of an allergic reaction (e.g., rash, hives, wheezing, tight chest, swelling in face)

Who should not take exenatide?

- Patients with a personal or family history of medullary thyroid cancer or Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia Syndrome Type 2 (MEN2)
- People with very poor kidney function
- History of drug-induced immune mediated thrombocytopenia (low platelets)
- People with prior allergic reaction to exenatide

References

1. Astrazeneca AB. Bydureon Bcise (Exenatide Synthetic). U.S. Food and Drug Administration website. www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda_docs/label/2021/209210s017lbl.pdf. Revised July 2021. Accessed April 27, 2022

