**What is Sitagliptin?**

Sitagliptin (Januvia) is a medication used to lower blood sugar in people with Type 2 Diabetes. It is a member of the DPP-4 inhibitor class of drugs. It is also available in a combined tablet with another diabetes drug called Metformin; this is known as Janumet.

**How does Sitagliptin work?**

Sitagliptin causes an increase in the level of hormones in the gut (bowels) called ‘incretins’. ‘Incretins’ cause your body to produce more insulin. This helps lower your blood sugar levels.

The increased levels of ‘incretins’ also slow your stomach and intestines down leading to a slightly decreased appetite and a sensation of feeling ‘full’ more quickly when eating a meal. This may lead to some mild weight loss, which is usually helpful for your diabetes.

**How is Sitagliptin given?**

Sitagliptin is given in tablet form and can be taken at any time of the day, usually accompanied by a glass of water. It is important to take it at the same time each day. It can be taken on an empty stomach.

**What are the risks of taking Sitagliptin?**

Sitagliptin is tolerated well by the vast majority of people and most people do not experience any significant side effects. A full list of possible side effects is provided in the ‘patient leaflet’, which is found in all tablet boxes.

Sitagliptin is designed to lower your blood sugar levels and if taken along with certain other tablets this can increase your risk of a very low blood sugar (a ‘hypo’ or ‘hypoglycaemia’). Symptoms include feeling very sweaty, shakiness and a rapid heart beat. Your doctor or nurse will advise you if you are taking any medications that might increase your risk of a ‘hypo’ and will advise you how to alter your medication if this is a problem. ‘Hypos’ are usually easily treated with a snack containing sugar.

Headaches and changes in bowel habit (diarrhoea or constipation) are the most common side effects of Sitagliptin and occur in about 1% of people. These symptoms are usually very mild but can persist. If this is the case then speak to your doctor or nurse.

There are a few very rare side effects of Sitagliptin. Gallstone disease, cholecystitis (inflammation of the gallbladder) and pancreatitis have been reported in some people taking Sitagliptin. **It is important that you contact your doctor or nurse immediately if you develop severe abdominal (tummy) or back pain.**

Sitagliptin can also interact with other medications like Digoxin, antibiotics, HIV drugs and anti-fungal medications, so let your doctor know if you are taking any of these. Let the doctor know if you are taking any herbal remedies or alternative non-medical therapies as these could also interact with Sitagliptin.

**When should Sitagliptin not be used?**

People who have had pancreatitis or who have very poor kidney function should not take Sitagliptin. Sitagliptin should also not be given to women who are pregnant, planning pregnancy or breast feeding.

**Getting the most from Sitagliptin**

Continue to take Sitagliptin regularly unless your doctor or nurse tells you otherwise. It is important that you keep your regular clinic appointments.

If you have been advised by your doctor or nurse about changes to your diet, stopping smoking or taking regular exercise, it is important that you follow this advice.

**NOTES**

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**Edinburgh Centre for Endocrinology and Diabetes**

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