which work in the same way as exercise and weight reduction. This is an insulin sensitiser which gets insulin to work more efficiently.

The third group, thiazolidenediones (rosiglitazone), are also insulin sensitisers.

A fourth group, alpha-glucosidase inhibitors (acarbose), slow down the entry of food glucose into the body.

The fifth and newest group of tablets are called the incretin enhancers (sitagliptin) and they act by augmenting a natural substance called GLP-1 that in turn stimulates insulin release.

This shows that diabetes tablets vary in the way they act. Even those that stimulate the pancreas to produce insulin cannot be termed 'insulin tablets'.

Q. What is the correct way to manage my type 2 diabetes?

A. Recognise that you can't do it alone. You need the support of your family. You need to learn about your condition. You need to see your doctor and your diabetes care team regularly.

Managing type 2 diabetes includes not just good control of your blood sugar and attaining the required glycaemic (blood sugar) goals, but also proper management of cholesterol and blood pressure levels, and, if necessary, refrain from cigarette-smoking.

Regular surveillance for the onset of complications is also part and parcel of good diabetes management. This would include annual or more frequent eye, feet, kidney and heart checks.

Your doctor may also ask you to take a blood-thinning agent, like aspirin, regularly to prevent heart attacks and stroke.

Q. Is there any way to reduce my dependency on medication?

A. It is important to understand that medication is an essential component of diabetes care and management. Type 2 diabetes spans one's lifetime. Controlling diabetes with just dietary and exercise plans is good, but over the years, it becomes harder and harder to achieve or maintain your target blood sugar goals without medication.

In addition, the target figures of blood cholesterol and blood pressure are very strict, given the high risk a person with diabetes has of succumbing to a heart attack – and these can often only be achieved with appropriate medication.

And so, until someone comes up with a 'poly-pill', a single tablet containing a variety of medication targeting blood sugar, cholesterol, blood pressure and blood thinning, you have to accept the fact that overall good diabetes control requires much more than just one pill.

Q. What is the good news, if any, about type 2 diabetes?

A. We are gaining a better understanding of the condition. We know how to prevent type 2 diabetes to those at risk – through lifestyle measures as well as medication. To the cooperative person who works with his doctor and is motivated to control his diabetes well, it is possible to do so.

Science is advancing in the right direction, with newer, better and stronger tablets that have less side effects. To those with type 2 diabetes, the message is as strong as ever. Don't give up!

Each year, a further 7 million people develop diabetes.

Snapshots >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>