



# spotlight on health

## Is A Combination Pill Right For You?

(NAPSA)—Over the years, doctors have prescribed many different combinations of two or more medications in one combination pill. Glucovance (glyburide and metformin HCl), Tylenol plus codeine, and Ortho Tri-cyclen (a combination oral contraceptive), are just a few. Combination pills can be a convenient option for people who take multiple daily medications as long as the individual drugs and doses are appropriate, as proven by the examples mentioned above.

For metabolic diseases like diabetes, combination therapy can be a little tricky because doctors are constantly fine-tuning treatment to meet each patient's needs. Combination pills can limit flexibility.

"Once a person has diabetes, that person has it for life. How a person's body responds to treatment—whether it's exercise or medication—will change a lot over the course of time," said diabetologist Anne Peters-Harmel, M.D., of the University of Southern California. "A pill that rolls everything into one may sound like a great option for some patients, but combination pills have limitations," said Peters-Harmel.

A person may take only one kind of medication each day (monotherapy) or doctors may prescribe a combination of medications. A new type of diabetes treatment, the combination pill, puts two kinds of medications into one pill. This may be less convenient than it sounds.

Because patients respond differently to certain medications, doctors prescribe a variety of diabetes medications at different dosages to personalize the treat-



**Combination pills for diabetes patients offer convenience, but may not be the best choice for everyone.**

ment approach for that person. Personalizing treatment requires flexibility. However, this kind of flexibility is not possible with the all-in-one combination pill since drug dosages are pre-set.

Combination pills may mean a patient has to take more or less of a certain medication each day or have to take medication more often than before. Ironically, another outcome of switching to a combination product is that it may have to be taken more often than before, when individual medications were taken as separate pills but at more appropriate dosage levels.

"A variety of different factors, including blood sugar control, cholesterol levels and overall quality of life, help us determine a treatment plan," said Peters-Harmel. "We weigh the advantages and disadvantages to be sure we map out the best route for the patient."