

Managing Type 2 Diabetes



Type 2 diabetes is a long-term (chronic) condition. Managing it may mean making some tough changes. Your healthcare team can help you.

You'll need to balance your medicine with diet and activity. This will help you manage your type 2 diabetes. You will also need to check your blood sugar often. And work with your healthcare provider to prevent complications.

Ask your team about a service called diabetes self-management education and support (DSMES). You will learn skills to help you better manage your diabetes and find support when you need it. This service may be given in a group setting or one-on-one with your team. It may also be available via telehealth.



Take your medicine

You may take pills or give yourself insulin shots for diabetes. Or you may use both. Take your medicines or give yourself insulin at the right times. This will help you control your blood sugar. Think about ways that will help you remember to take your medicines the right way every day. Ask your healthcare provider or team for ideas.

You may only take pills for your diabetes now. But this may change. Over time, most people with type 2 diabetes also need insulin or other injections.

Eat healthy

A healthy diet helps control the amount of sugar in your blood. It also helps you stay at a healthy weight. Or it helps you lose weight, if you're overweight. Extra weight makes it harder to control diabetes.

Your healthcare team will help you create a plan that works for you. You don't have to give up all the foods you like. Have meals and snacks with:

- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Lean meats or other healthy proteins
- Whole grains
- Low-fat or nonfat dairy products

Replace sugary drinks (including fruit juice) with water or low-calorie, no calorie drinks whenever possible. Don't have foods with added sugar.

Be physically active

Being active helps lower your blood sugar. Activity helps your body use insulin to turn food into energy. It also helps you manage your weight:

Ask your healthcare provider to help you to make an activity program that's right for you. Your program is based on your age, general health, and types of activity you enjoy. Start off slowly. But try to aim for at least 150 minutes of exercise or activity each week. Start with 30 minutes a day. Exercise in 10-minute blocks. Don't let more than 2 days go by without being active.

Check your blood sugar

A regular part of your care may be to check your own blood sugar. Or you may only need to check your blood sugar from time to time. Your healthcare provider will tell you how to check your blood sugar at home. Checking it tells you if your blood sugar is in your target range. Having your blood sugars within the target range means that you are managing your diabetes well.

If your blood sugar levels are too high or too low, your healthcare provider may suggest changes to your diet or activity level. They may also adjust your medicine.

Your healthcare provider may also tell you to check your blood sugar more often when you are sick.

Take care of yourself

When you have diabetes, you may be more likely to get other health problems. They include foot, eye, heart, nerve, and kidney problems. You can help prevent these problems by controlling your blood sugar. And by taking good care of yourself. Your healthcare provider, nurse, diabetes educator, and others can help you with the following:

- **Checkups.** You should have regular checkups with your healthcare provider. At those visits, you will have a physical exam that includes checking your feet. Your healthcare provider will also check your blood pressure and weight. Take your shoes off before your appointment starts to be sure your feet are checked. Be sure to bring the records of your blood sugar tests. Ask your healthcare providers if there are new or better ways to check on your blood sugars.
- **Other exams.** You'll also need eye, foot, and dental exams at least once each year or as advised.
- **Lab tests.** You will have blood and urine tests:
 - Your healthcare provider will check your hemoglobin A1C at least twice a year. This blood test shows how well you have been controlling your blood sugar over 2 to 3 months. The results help your healthcare provider manage your diabetes.
 - You will also have other lab tests. For example, to check for kidney problems and abnormal cholesterol levels.
- **Smoking.** If you smoke, you will need to quit. Smoking makes it more likely you will get complications from diabetes. Ask your healthcare provider about ways to quit. Also don't use e-cigarette, or vaping products.
- **Vaccines.** Get a yearly flu shot. And ask your healthcare provider about vaccines to prevent pneumonia, shingles, COVID-19, RSV, and hepatitis B.

Stress and depression

Most people have challenges throughout their lives. Living with diabetes can increase your stress. Feeling stressed or depressed can actually affect your blood sugar levels.

Tell your healthcare provider if you are having trouble coping with diabetes. They can help or refer you to other healthcare providers or programs.

To learn more

Know where you can get help. You can try the following:

- **Support.** Ask family and friends to support your efforts to take care of yourself. Or look for a diabetes support group nearby or on the internet. Check the [Community Overview link at diabetes.org/get-involved/community](https://www.diabetes.org/get-involved/community).
- **Counseling.** Talk with a social worker, psychologist, psychiatrist, or other counselor.
- **Information.** Contact the [American Diabetes Association at www.diabetes.org](https://www.diabetes.org) or 800-342-2383. Another good source is the [Association of Diabetes Care and Education Specialists at www.diabeteseducator.org/living-with-diabetes](https://www.diabeteseducator.org/living-with-diabetes).

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