

# Managing Your Diabetes: A Simple Guide for You and Your Family

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Target: Patients & caregivers | 750 words | 6th-grade reading level

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## What Is Diabetes?

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Diabetes happens when your blood sugar stays too high. Think of blood sugar like the gas in your car - you need the right amount to keep going. Too much sugar in your blood can hurt your body over time.

There are two main types:

- **Type 1:** Your body stops making insulin (the hormone that controls blood sugar)
- **Type 2:** Your body doesn't use insulin well (most common type)

## Daily Care Made Easy

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### Check Your Numbers

- Test blood sugar as your doctor suggests
- Write down your numbers
- Normal range: 80-130 before meals, under 180 after eating
- Don't panic if numbers are off sometimes - focus on the pattern

### Take Your Medicine

- Set phone alarms for medication times
- Use a pill organizer
- Never skip doses, even if you feel fine
- Call your doctor before stopping any medicine

### Eat Smart, Not Perfect

#### Good choices most of the time:

- Fill half your plate with vegetables
- Choose whole grains (brown rice, whole wheat bread)
- Pick lean proteins (chicken, fish, beans)
- Drink water instead of sugary drinks

**It's okay to have treats sometimes.** The key is balance, not perfection.

### Move Your Body

- Aim for 30 minutes of walking most days
- Take the stairs when you can
- Park farther away
- Dance while cooking dinner
- Exercise lowers blood sugar naturally!

## When to Call Your Doctor

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### Call right away if:

- Blood sugar is over 300
- You're vomiting and can't keep food down
- You have chest pain or trouble breathing
- You feel confused or very tired

### Schedule regular visits for:

- A1C test every 3 months (goal: under 7% for most people)
- Eye exam once a year
- Foot check at every visit

## Family and Friends Can Help

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### What caregivers should know:

- Learn the signs of low blood sugar (shaky, sweaty, confused)
- Keep glucose tablets or juice nearby
- Support healthy eating by making meals together
- Encourage exercise by being active together
- Listen without judging

## Your Diabetes Toolkit

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### Must-haves:

- Blood sugar meter and strips
- Glucose tablets for low blood sugar
- Medical alert bracelet
- Emergency contact list
- Medication list

### Helpful apps:

- Blood sugar tracking apps
- Carb counting tools
- Medication reminders

## Living Well With Diabetes

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Remember: Having diabetes doesn't mean you can't live a full, happy life. Millions of people manage diabetes successfully every day.

### Your goals:

- Keep blood sugar in target range most of the time
- Stay active and eat well
- Take medications as prescribed
- Get regular checkups
- Enjoy life!

**You've got this!** Small, consistent steps make the biggest difference. Focus on progress, not perfection.

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This guide was created by a licensed Physician Assistant with expertise in chronic disease management and patient education.