

# DIABETES



## Caring for someone with diabetes

and taking care of yourself

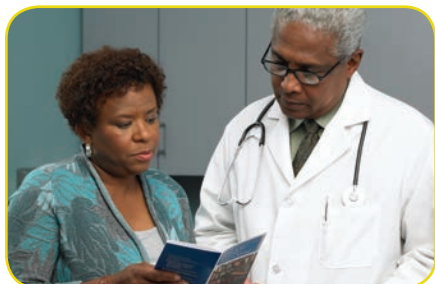
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# DIABETES

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This booklet covers some basic topics of diabetes and offers suggestions for you as you care for someone with diabetes.

Many people in the United States are faced with caring for someone with diabetes. You are 1 of them. Diabetes is a serious, lifelong condition. There is no cure, but it can be managed so the person you are caring for can lead a healthier life.

Caring for someone else is not easy. It takes a lot of time and energy. Many caregivers ignore their own needs. Remember to visit your health care provider while you are caring for someone with diabetes. Your own health is important, too.

## How to support a family member or friend with diabetes

If you have a person in your care who has diabetes, here's how you can help. You want him or her to stay healthy by eating right, staying active, taking medicine, monitoring blood sugar levels, and more.

The person in your care has a health care team, which may include a primary care provider, specialists, nurses, a diabetes educator, and a dietician. They can help you learn how to care for your family member or friend.



**"I keep track of doctor's visits and medicine for him."**

## Ways to help keep someone with diabetes healthy

1. Learn about diabetes. Attend a diabetes education class together. These classes are available at many hospitals.
2. Understand diabetes. Find out how to manage it with diet, physical activity, and/or medicines.
3. Find out what he or she needs to be healthy. Ask the health care provider and the person you care for.
4. Offer the help that he or she asks for. Whether it is going to the store to get glucose meter test strips or keeping snack foods out of the house, do your best to help.

### TIP

Learning more about caring for someone with diabetes will make the task easier.

## Understanding diabetes



### What is diabetes?

Diabetes is an illness that results in too much sugar in the blood. A main goal of treating diabetes is to keep blood sugar controlled.

The body's main source of energy is glucose, a type of sugar. This sugar comes from

1. The food that is eaten
2. The sugar that is made in the liver

Sugar is the body's main fuel. But having too much sugar in the blood can be a problem.

## Diabetes and the body

Diabetes may lead to serious complications such as

- Heart disease and stroke
- Kidney failure
- Vision loss
- Nervous system problems, such as loss of feeling or pain in the feet and legs
- Amputations or loss of part of the leg

### TIP

Make sure the person you care for visits his or her health care provider routinely.

## Diabetes and blood sugar

People with diabetes may have high or low blood sugar at times. Both can be serious if untreated. So learn about high and low blood sugar.

High blood sugar can occur when the person

- Eats too much
- Is less active than usual
- Is sick or under stress
- Needs a change in medicine

Low blood sugar can occur when the person

- Misses a meal or snack , or eats less than usual
- Takes certain types of diabetes medicine
- Is more active than usual

High or low blood sugar may not cause any symptoms. A blood sugar test is the best way to know a person's blood sugar level.

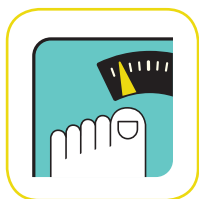
Tell the health care provider if the person often has high or low blood sugar levels.



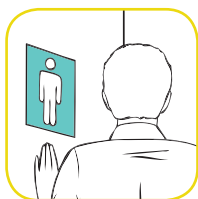
## Common signs of high blood sugar include



Feeling thirsty



Losing weight



Having to  
urinate more  
often



Having  
blurred vision

## Common signs of low blood sugar include



Feeling  
nervous



Feeling shaky



Being sweaty



Feeling dizzy  
or confused

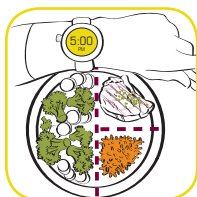
## Preventing high and low blood sugar

There are things you can do to help the person with diabetes prevent having high and low blood sugar levels.

Have the person in your care

- Follow a healthy eating plan. Try to eat meals at the same time each day.
- Take his or her medicine as prescribed at the same time each day.
- Check his or her blood sugar levels as instructed by the health care provider. Share the blood sugar results with the health care provider.
- Always carry fast-acting sources of sugar, such as hard candy or glucose tablets. That way he or she can treat low blood sugar levels at any time.

## Ways to help prevent high and low blood sugar levels



Eat meals  
at about the  
same time



Be sure  
blood sugar  
is tested as  
recommended



Keep a supply  
of healthy  
snacks on  
hand



Take medicine  
as instructed

### TIP

Ask the health care team when you need to call them about high or low blood sugar.



“I learned to keep track of daily blood sugar tests at home.”

## What you should know about checking a person's blood sugar levels at home

The health care team will help you learn

- The blood sugar levels that are right for the person in your care.
- How to check the person's blood sugar using a blood sugar meter.
- How often the person should check his or her blood sugar and when the best time is to check it.

If the person's blood sugar level is too high or too low, he or she may need a change in the diabetes medicine. Check his or her meal and exercise plans and other medicines too.

## Know the ABCs of diabetes

Talk with the health care provider of the person in your care about more ways to take care of that person. You can start by knowing the ABCs of diabetes:

- A for A1C. The A1C test shows the average level of blood sugar over the past 2 to 3 months. It is reported as a percentage (%).
- B for blood pressure. The blood pressure measures how hard the heart has to work to pump blood to the body. It is written as 1 number over another.
- C for cholesterol. Cholesterol is a fat-like substance in the blood. Cholesterol levels are checked with a blood test.

The health care team will set goals for each of the ABCs. Staying at or near these goals can help prevent or delay other health problems.

### TIP

Ask the health care provider what the A1C, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels should be for the person in your care.

## Medications

Learn all you can about the medicines this person takes. Talk to the health care provider about these medicines.

Ask the health care provider what you should know about giving medicines to someone with diabetes.

Here are some questions you can ask the health care provider:

- What should I know about giving diabetes medicine to someone?
- What medicines are not good to take with other medicines?
- What vitamins, supplements, and foods are not good to take with these medicines?
- What are some possible side effects of these medicines?
- Are there any special things I should know about these medicines? For example, should they be taken with food or at a certain time of day?



“I use the same pharmacy to keep track of all the medicines my mom is taking.”

## Use a medication tracker

- Ask the health care provider for a medicine tracker. Use it to write down the medicines. Use it to mark them off as the person takes them each day.
- Go over the medicine tracker with the health care provider at each visit.

Diabetes does not go away, so it is important for the person you are caring for to stay on his or her medicine.

## Paying for medicine

Cost should not keep someone from taking medicine recommended by a health care provider. These following options may help:

- Discuss whether a 90-day supply might lower medicine costs.
- Ask about other options to lower costs.
- Find out if the person you are caring for qualifies for a program that helps people receive free or low-cost medicine and note them below:

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## Medicine assistance Web sites

- Partnership for Prescription Assistance  
[pparx.org](http://pparx.org)
- RX Assist—Patient Assistance Program Center  
[rxassist.org](http://rxassist.org)

### TIP

Always ask the health care provider before the person you care for stops taking any medicine.

## Home nutrition

### The importance of healthy eating

If you plan meals, healthy eating can include foods the person likes to eat.

A healthy eating plan includes a variety of foods from every group. This includes fruit, vegetables, fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products, lean meats, chicken, fish, beans, eggs, nuts, and whole grains, such as whole-wheat bread and brown rice.

Help the person with diabetes plan his or her meals.  
Ask the nutritionist or diabetes educator:

- What kinds of foods should the person I care for eat everyday?
- Which food groups should we choose?
- What serving sizes should he or she eat?
- How many servings should he or she have from each food group?



“I have learned to teach by example. I’m trying to set a good example for my daughters.”

If you need help finding a dietitian in your area, contact a local American Diabetes Association or the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

American Diabetes Association  
1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383)  
[diabetes.org](http://diabetes.org)

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
1-800-366-1655  
[eatright.org](http://eatright.org)

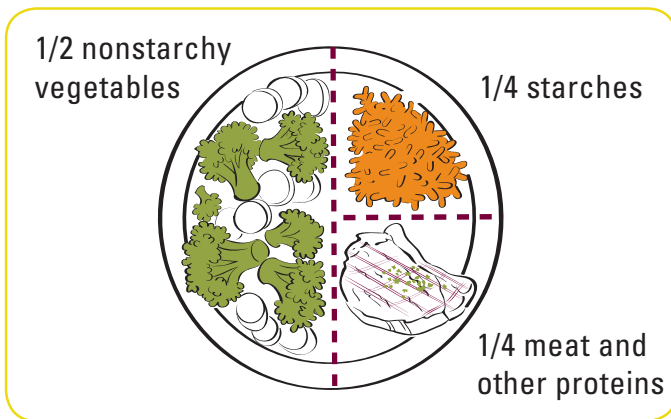
# DIABETES

## Getting started

Meal planning depends on the person's

- Calorie and nutrition needs
- Lifestyle and eating habits
- Foods he or she likes to eat

One way to get started is by using a dinner plate and dividing it into portion sizes:



## Controlling portions at home

You do not need to measure and count everything the person in your care eats for the rest of his or her life. Just do it long enough for you both to learn the right portions to eat.

Help the person in your care with portion control:

- Put the right portion size on the plate.D46 Do not let the person eat straight from the box, bag, or cooking pot.
- Make sure the person eats slowly.
- Freeze leftovers in single-serving portions.
- Have the person eat meals at the same time every day. Help him or her to not skip meals.

### TIP

Offer second servings of vegetables and salads instead of meats and desserts.

## Physical activity

### Be an active partner in managing diabetes

You can help the person in your care be more active. When someone becomes more active, he or she may have more energy.

Explain to the person in your care how regular physical activity can help in managing their diabetes

Regular physical activity can

- Lower blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol
- Relieve stress
- Lower risk for heart disease and stroke
- Help insulin work better
- Improve blood flow
- Keep joints healthy
- Help a person lose weight

## Help the person in your care be more active

Always talk to the health care provider before beginning any exercise program. Here are some activities that may work for the person in your care:

- Playing with children or pets for aerobic activity
- Taking part in interactive video gaming or group exercises, like dancing for aerobic activity
- Standing on 1 foot for balance
- Trying group activities like dancing or bike riding—sometimes it's fun to exercise in a group instead of alone
- Exercising from a seated position using dumbbells, resistant bands, or even a can of soup, if mobility is limited

### **TIP**

Stretching is an easy way to help maintain flexibility and circulation.



## What can stop a person from being more active?

Everyone can think of reasons not to be more physically active even when they know being active will help them. Getting more physically active begins with wanting to become more active.

The person in your care may stop his or her physical activity. So think about what is keeping him or her from being active. Ask members of the health care team, friends, and family for ideas. They may know ways to help him or her be more active.



Use the table below to list what gets in the way of activity and make a plan

What gets in the way of activity?
Plans for more activity:

Talk to members of the health care team, family, and friends to take small steps to improve the activity level of the person you are caring for and plan for more activity.

## Coordination of care

The person in your care may have other conditions along with diabetes. Work with the health care provider to give the best care.

Here are some ways to help the person in your care:

- Tell the health care provider about any other conditions.
- Talk with the health care provider about what is and what is not working with the current treatment.
- Before the appointment, make a list of questions you want to talk about.

Use the space below to write your questions:

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- After the health care provider answers your question, rephrase what you believe you heard to make sure you heard him or her correctly. If you don't understand, it's okay to ask again.
- Write the answers from the health care provider below or ask him or her to write it for you:

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### TIP

Work with the health care provider to review a treatment plan that is best for the person in your care.

# DIABETES

Use this page to keep important information for the person in your care

Health Care Team	Name	Phone Number
Primary care provider		
Endocrinologist		
Ophthalmologist		
Podiatrist		
Dentist		
Diabetes educator		
Registered dietician		
Pharmacist		

Also, keep a list of medications with you, transportation and adult daycare telephone numbers, and back-up caregiver's contact information.

## Transportation

You may find transportation to the health care providers' appointments a challenge.

- Ask others to help share the responsibility. Take turns transporting the person you are caring for.
- Call a local taxi service or consider using public transportation. Many public transportation systems have special transit services.
- Write down and discuss with the health care team your scheduling and transportation needs. They may have recommendations for you.

### TIP

Plan ahead when you have to travel to a health care provider's appointment.

## Caring for yourself

### Take care of yourself

Caregiving can be stressful. Some ways to manage your stress are to

- Continue to take care of your own health. Stay physically active, eat well, and go to your health care provider regularly.
- Find someone to talk to when caregiving gets to be too much.
- Avoid taking on additional responsibilities and learn to say “No.”
- Ask for and accept help. Involve other friends and family in providing care.
- Stay organized and prioritize what needs to be done.



"I have to take care of myself so I can be a good caregiver."

Talk to your health care provider about ways you can stay healthy. Then you can be there for the person you are taking care of.

## TIP

Take care of yourself first, so you can better take care of others.

## Caregiver support

Ask for help from others:

- Ask family members and friends to help with caregiving tasks, such as ordering medicine, going food shopping, or driving to an appointment.
- Be open to asking neighbors, members of your church or synagogue, coworkers, a support group, or organizations to help you.
- Write down the concerns you have and discuss them with the health care team to learn what other options may be available to help you.

Use the space below to write your concerns:

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## Coping with stress as a caregiver

- Find a support group. It may be a good way to cope with stress.
- Find other caregivers who are dealing with the same things.

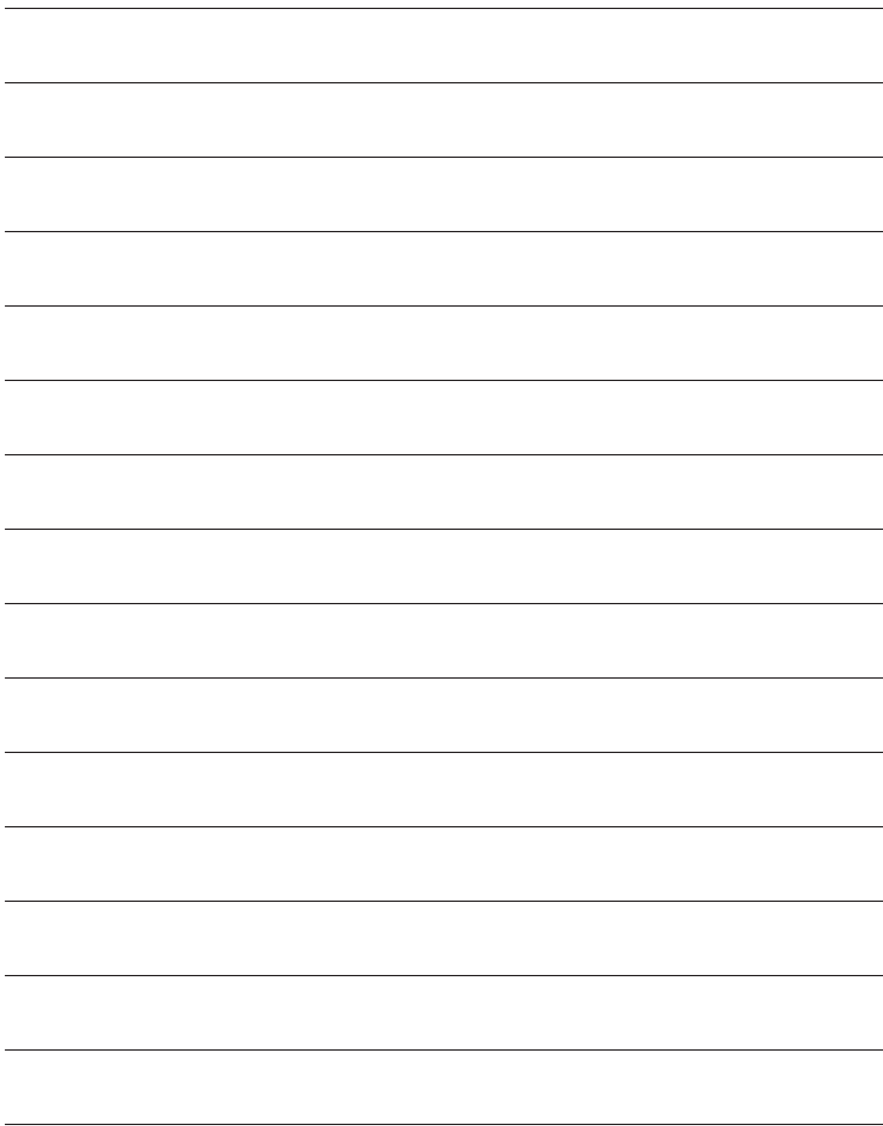
## Web sites

- American Association of Diabetes Educators  
[aadenet.org](http://aadenet.org)
- American Diabetes Association  
[diabetes.org](http://diabetes.org)
- Journey for Control  
[JourneyForControl.com](http://JourneyForControl.com)
- AARP  
[aarp.org](http://aarp.org)
- Eldercare Locator  
[eldercare.gov](http://eldercare.gov)
- Family Caregiver Alliance  
[caregiver.org](http://caregiver.org)

## DIABETES

## Notes:

[illegible]



## DIABETES



# Take care of yourself, so you can help the person in your care

Protect your health. It's the best thing you can do for yourself and the person in your care.



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