



# Diabetes Outlook

STAYING HEALTHY ■ LIVING WELL

SPRING 2009

## How to Handle Changes in Your Health

A diabetes diagnosis can be overwhelming—and so can the discovery of health issues linked with the condition. You may react with anxiety, confusion, or even denial. Move beyond feelings like these and focus on taking good care of yourself. Here's what you can do.

**Ask questions.** Find out what the issue is and ask your doctor to explain it in terms you understand. Ask what to expect,

whether you need tests, what your treatment options are, and how soon you should decide on and start treatment. If anything isn't clear to you, keep asking until it is.

**Make a personal treatment plan.** Talk through the pros and cons of each treatment option with your doctor and discuss your preferences and feelings honestly. Consider how to make the plan work in your life.

**Get support from family and friends.** Comfort from loved ones can help you cope. Let them know how they can help, such as by going with you to health care visits and taking notes. Also ask your doctor whether there are support groups you can join.

With these simple steps, you can empower yourself to handle any new health issue you face.



### What's the Connection Between Diabetes and Depression?

Having diabetes can raise the risk for depression. Depression may make it hard to exercise or eat well, which are things you need to do to help you manage diabetes. Watch for these symptoms of depression:

- Ongoing sadness, emptiness, or hopelessness
- Loss of interest in things you enjoyed
- Sleeping too little or too much or waking early
- Eating more or less than you used to
- Trouble concentrating, remembering, or deciding
- Low energy or fatigue
- Nervousness, anxiety, restlessness, or irritability
- Guilt or worthlessness
- Aches, pains, or other discomfort that doesn't go away

Tell your doctor if you have any of these symptoms and if they occur for two weeks or more. Poorly controlled diabetes can cause some of the same symptoms. Your doctor can determine what's causing them and treat you or refer you to a mental health professional.

## Good Health Guidelines

For people with diabetes, it's important to have the following tests and checkups:

- Hemoglobin A1c test two to four times a year
- Blood pressure checked at every office visit
- Foot inspection at every office visit and complete sensory foot exam once a year
- Dilated retinal (eye) examination once a year
- Fasting lipid profile test at least once a year
- Urinary protein/microalbumin test once a year
- Cholesterol levels, including low-density lipoprotein and high-density lipoprotein, checked at least once a year
- Serum creatinine measured once a year
- Regular dental checkup at least twice a year

### A CLOSER LOOK

#### Understanding the A1c Test

The A1c test is a blood test that measures blood sugar control for the past 60 to 90 days. Your A1c level should have been measured when you were first diagnosed with diabetes or when your diabetes treatment began. A1c should be tested two to four times a year, depending on how well your blood glucose is managed and whether you have had a recent change in your diabetes medications. The target A1c level is usually less than 7 percent. Check with your doctor about what the best target is for you.

**To help you remember when to get your next A1c test, write down the date of your last test below.**

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*Although these are suggested guidelines for care, please check with your benefits plan for coverage. Guidelines for children may be different. Check with your doctor to learn which tests children need and how frequently they need them.*

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# Help Your Child

## *Handle a Diabetes Diagnosis*

**Your child has been diagnosed with diabetes. What next? As a parent, your child will look to you for help with learning how to manage the condition. You'll likely have to help your child work through the emotional side of having diabetes, too.**

Fortunately, there are many ways you can be supportive. Following these steps can help your child face diabetes with confidence and courage.

**Talk it out.** At first, your child may feel mixed emotions about having diabetes. He or she may feel different from others and ask, "Why me?" Feeling sad, mad, or afraid is also common. Let your child know these feelings are normal. To work through them, suggest that your child keep a journal of his or her feelings. If answering questions about diabetes makes your child anxious, practice by role-playing what to say. Talking with a school counselor may also help.

**Involve the whole family.** After your child's diagnosis, try to keep your family's routine as normal as possible. Where it needs to be adapted to help with diabetes care, involve everyone. Foods and activities that are healthy for your child with diabetes are healthy for the rest of the family, too. Ask others in the household to help with tasks such as checking and recording blood glucose levels so that the responsibility is shared.

**Encourage peer connections.** Children with diabetes can learn a lot about living with the condition by connecting with other children who have it. Support groups, camps, and other kids' programs are available through clinics, hospitals, and organizations such as the American Diabetes Association. Ask your child's doctor for resources. Also encourage your child to hang onto those friends who are understanding and supportive, whether they have diabetes or not.



**Build a support system for your child.** You can do this by informing relatives, close family friends, and your child's teacher and school nurse about his or her diagnosis. Talk with parents of your child's friends, too. Explain the basics of diabetes to clear up any misconceptions and unnecessary fears. It may help your child feel more at ease to know that the people in his or her life are familiar with diabetes.

**Promote independence.** Teach your child as much as he or she can understand about good diabetes care. Encourage your child to make healthy choices and praise his or her efforts to care for diabetes. The right degree of independence will depend on your child's age, so ask his or her doctor for guidance. When your child needs your direct help, make it a team effort and work together.

# Overcome Hurdles *to Managing Diabetes*

When it comes to handling a chronic condition such as diabetes, you may encounter hurdles along your path to staying healthy. The good news is that there are ways to handle common obstacles.



If you struggle with any of the challenges listed below, the solutions that follow may give you the direction you need.

**Challenge #1:** You find it hard to stick to your meal plan or exercise program when you're not at home.

**Solution:** A meal plan or exercise program that looks good on paper or works on typical days may seem hard to maintain under other circumstances. First, identify the situations that challenge you. It could be when you're at work or school, out with friends, traveling, or short on time. Do coworkers or friends encourage you to drift from your meal plan? Talk with them about

your dietary needs. Do you have a busy day coming up soon? Try to build three brisk 10-minute walks into your schedule if one 30-minute workout won't fit. Planning ahead for similar situations can give you a go-to plan for dealing with diabetes even when it seems inconvenient.

**Challenge #2:** You have trouble taking your diabetes medicines as prescribed.

**Solution:** Taking multiple medications and doses every day can make for a complex routine that's hard to remember. Talk with your doctor about simplifying your medicines or dosing schedule. Find out how your medicines work, why the

## Creating an Environment That Promotes Good Health

timing matters, and what could happen if you miss a dose.

Keeping up with your daily regimen might be easier if you understand why your schedule is so important. Try posting reminders or synch up your schedule with other daily tasks, such as brushing your teeth.

**Challenge #3:** You and your doctor agreed on goals for managing diabetes, but now they seem out of reach.

**Solution:** Your doctor is your partner, and the guidance he or she gives for setting goals is valuable. However, your goals have to be realistic because you're the one trying to reach them. What can help is having an individualized diabetes management plan that you and your doctor can discuss and refine at each visit. Together, you can figure out how to take small steps to reach your bigger goals. When something doesn't work, let your doctor know. That way you can consider what may work better next time. Having some flexibility will help you figure out the best way to reach your goals.

**Challenge #4:** At times it feels like too much mentally or emotionally to take care of diabetes.

**Solution:** Stress, anxiety, and depression can make self-care seem like too much to handle. You might feel overwhelmed sometimes with diabetes or other life issues. These are the times to ask for help rather than go it alone. Talk with a friend or relative, your doctor, a diabetes educator, a counselor or social worker, a support group, a faith leader, or anyone you trust to listen, offer comfort, and help you in making things better.

As your needs and abilities change, the way you take care of diabetes will change, too. Learning to overcome the hard parts of keeping diabetes under control will help you adjust and succeed when a new issue presents itself. Whatever the challenge, remember that you and your doctor can find the right approach together.

The people, places, and objects that surround you can greatly influence your choices. As you strive to adopt healthier habits, how is your environment working for or against you?

### Which Factors Matter for You?

Your first step is to identify factors or situations that prompt you to make less healthy choices. For example, do you tend to smoke when you're at a bar? Are you tempted to eat a pile of chips if there's an open bag in the cupboard? Is it hard to stick to your exercise schedule when a certain friend calls offering other plans? When you find yourself foregoing a healthy choice you intended to make, ask yourself which circumstances may be playing a part.

To reduce the effect of troublesome environmental factors, you may simply need to avoid them for a while. Being in a bar can't trigger you to smoke if you don't go into a bar. You can't raid the cupboard for chips if you didn't buy any. Avoidance is not always realistic over the long term. However, it can be a good short-term tool as you develop other strategies.

### Practice Makes Perfect

Another approach is to imagine you're faced with an environmental trigger and to practice in your mind how to handle it. How can you keep your resolve? For example, when that friend calls and tempts you to skip your workout, can you tell her you appreciate the invitation but have plans you need to keep? Can you negotiate to meet her later or invite her to exercise with you? Rehearse coming up with something that works for you. When you're thoughtful about your environment, you can set yourself up for success.





### Leafy green vegetables.

Vegetables such as spinach, romaine lettuce, kale, bok choy, and collard greens, which are rich in vitamins and low in carbohydrates.

**Peer connections.** Contact and friendship between people who are similar in some way, such as between children with diabetes. Encouraging your child to connect with other kids who have diabetes, through support groups or camps, may help them cope.

### Strength training.

Exercise designed to build muscle. It can include lifting dumbbells or using weight machines or elastic bands to provide resistance. Benefits include burning calories. It's one of the three types of exercise you need, along with aerobic exercise and stretching.

## Round Out Your Exercise Routine

Did you know that exercise helps lower blood glucose and improve the body's use of insulin? Exercise boosts energy and cuts stress, too. To maximize these benefits, it helps to have a well-rounded fitness routine that includes aerobic activity, strength training, and flexibility exercises. Here's a closer look at each type of exercise and how to include them in your workout.



**Aerobic activity.** Aerobic exercise requires using your large muscles. It speeds up your heartbeat and makes you breathe harder. Walking briskly, dancing, swimming, cycling, skating, and playing basketball all count.

**How much:** Aim for at least 30 minutes a day, five days a week.

**Getting started:** Begin with five to 10 minutes a day, if needed, and add a little time each week. Exercise in 10-minute segments at least three times a day if 30 minutes is too much at once.

**Strength training.** You can use weight machines, dumbbells, or elastic bands for strength training. Daily activities, such as carrying groceries, get easier when you're stronger. Strength training not only burns calories and improves balance, it also builds bone.

**How much:** Do two or three strength-training workouts a week, with at least one day of rest in between.

**Getting started:** If you're new to strength training, ask your doctor for guidance or consider working with a fitness trainer.



**Flexibility exercises.** Stretching helps keep you limber so that you can move easily. It also helps prevent injuries and muscle soreness from other types of exercise.

**How much:** Warm up by walking for a few minutes and then stretch for five to 10 minutes before aerobic or strength activities. Stretch again afterward.

**Getting started:** Stretch until you feel a pull—not pain—and hold for 10 to 30 seconds. Repeat each stretch a few times, trying to reach farther each time.

Be sure to talk with your doctor before starting any new exercises.

# Go GREEN!

Going green is a move you can make with your diet by eating more leafy green vegetables.

Try spinach, romaine, and dark green lettuces; kale; and bok choy. Or go for collard, beet, mustard, and turnip greens.

## What's Great About Greens

Leafy greens are packed with valuable nutrients, including:

- Potassium, which promotes healthy blood pressure
- Fiber, which lowers cholesterol and heart disease risk
- Vitamin A, which promotes healthy skin and protects against infections
- Vitamin C, which helps wounds heal and promotes healthy gums and teeth
- Folate, which helps red blood cells form and prevents birth defects

Greens are also lower in carbohydrates compared to starchy vegetables, such as potatoes. They don't affect blood sugar as much.

## Adding Greens to Your Diet

In general, people with diabetes who eat about 2,000 calories daily should include four servings of vegetables in their diet. One serving of leafy greens means 1 cup of cooked greens or 2 cups of raw greens. However, if you take medication to thin your blood, you might need to limit your intake of leafy greens. Your doctor can help you work the right number of servings into your meal plan. And you can use these ideas to prepare greens as part of a healthy meal:

- Steam greens using water or low-fat broth.
- Sauté greens with a small amount of canola or olive oil.
- Mix greens with chopped onion or garlic or sprinkle with herbs and spices.
- Add a dash of vinegar or lemon juice to cooked or raw greens.
- Make a salad and add low-fat or fat-free dressing.



## Snow Pea Bisque

Serves six

### Ingredients

- ¾ cup sliced green onions
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 1 tbsp. margarine (liquid or tub)
- 1 lb. snow peas, trimmed
- 2 cups coarsely chopped romaine lettuce
- 2 cups coarsely chopped spinach
- 4 cups low sodium vegetable broth
- ½ tsp. dried tarragon
- ½ tsp. dried mint
- 6 tbsp. plain fat-free yogurt

### Directions

Sauté onions in margarine in large saucepan until tender. Add snow peas, lettuce, and spinach; sauté five to 10 minutes. Add broth, tarragon, and mint; bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes, covered, or until snow peas are tender. Process soup in blender until smooth. Strain thoroughly with a fine sieve. Serve warm or cold with yogurt garnish.

### Per Serving

Calories 90, Total fat 3 g (Saturated fat 1 g), Cholesterol 70 mg, Sodium 70 mg, Total carbohydrate 11 g, Dietary fiber 3 g, Sugars 5 g, Protein 7 g

This recipe is from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



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