

Managing Type 1 Diabetes

Diabetes is a long-term **chronic** condition. Managing your diabetes means making some changes that may be hard. Your



healthcare provider, nurse, diabetes educator, and others can help you.

Managing type 1 diabetes means balancing your insulin with diet and activity. You will have to check your blood sugar and at times, ketones. You will also have to work with your healthcare provider to prevent complications.

Inject your insulin

You will need to inject insulin. Or, you may have an insulin pump. The insulin moves the sugar in your blood into your cells.

Insulin comes in several different types, depending on how quickly it begins working and how long the effect lasts. There is also insulin that is a combination of more than one type of insulin. Your healthcare provider, nurse, or a diabetes educator can help you with injections.

Make sure you use insulin as instructed by your healthcare provider. He or she may change the type, timing, or dose, if your blood sugar is not well controlled.

And, make sure your insulin is stored correctly and is not past the expiration date.

Eat healthy

A healthy, well-planned diet helps to control the amount of sugar in your blood. It also helps you stay at a healthy weight.

Your healthcare provider, nurse, a dietitian, or diabetes educator will help you create a plan that works for you. You don't have to give up all the foods you like. Having meals and snacks with vegetables, fruits, lean meats, or other healthy proteins, whole grains, and low or no-fat dairy products will help control your blood sugar.

Be physically active

Being active helps your body use insulin to turn food into energy.

Ask your healthcare provider to work with you to create an activity program that's right for you. Your activity program is based on your age, general health, and types of activity that you enjoy. Start slowly, but aim for at least 30 minutes of exercise or activity on most days.

Monitor your blood sugar

Your healthcare provider will give you instructions about checking your blood sugar at home. Checking it tells you if your blood sugar is in your target range. Having blood sugar levels in your target range means that you are managing your diabetes well.

Your healthcare provider will tell you what is too high and too low for you. Call your health care provider if your blood sugar is out of that range.

Your healthcare provider may also tell you to check your blood sugar more often when you are sick. At certain times, for example, when you have a cold or the flu, you may need to check it more often.

If your blood sugar levels are often too high or too low, your healthcare provider may suggest changes to your diet or activity level. He or she may also adjust your medication.

Check for ketones

You may sometimes need to check your urine for ketones. Ketones are chemicals that are produced when fat, instead of glucose, is burned for energy (ketosis). To check for ketones, follow instructions that come with the strips and from your healthcare provider, nurse, or diabetes educator. If ketones are present, always call your healthcare provider right away. Some people also use home glucose monitors to check the blood for ketosis. Ask your healthcare provider, nurse, or diabetes educator for more information.

Take care of yourself

When you have diabetes, you may be more likely to develop other health problems. They include foot, eye, heart, and kidney problems. By controlling your blood sugar, and taking good care of yourself, you can help to prevent these problems. Your healthcare provider, nurse, diabetes educator, and others can help you.

- **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.
- **Other exams.** You should also have complete eye, foot, and dental exams at least once every year.
- **Lab tests.** You will have blood and urine tests.
 - At least 2 times a year, your healthcare provider will check your hemoglobin A1C. 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 must quit. Smoking increases the chance that you will develop complications from diabetes. Ask your healthcare provider about ways to quit.
- **Vaccines.** Get a yearly flu shot. And, ask your healthcare provider about vaccines to prevent pneumonia and hepatitis B.

Stress and depression

Most people have challenges throughout their lives. Living with diabetes, or any serious condition, can increase your stress and make you feel a lot of different emotions. In diabetes, feeling stressed or depressed can actually affect your blood sugar levels.

If you are having trouble dealing with diabetes, tell your healthcare provider. He or she can help or refer you to other healthcare providers or programs.

Support and resources

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 locally or on the Internet. (Check the Connect with Others on www.diabetes.org.)
- **Counseling.** Talk with a social worker, psychologist, psychiatrist, or other counselor.
- **Information.** Contact the American Diabetes Association at 800-342-2383 or www.diabetes.org.
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