ENGLISH

4 Steps to Manage Your Diabetes for Life

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

This booklet gives four key steps to help you manage your diabetes and live a long and active life.

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Actions you can take

The marks ✓ in this booklet show actions you can take to manage your diabetes.

- ✓ **Help your health care team make a diabetes care plan that will work for you.**
- ✓ **Learn to make wise choices for your diabetes care each day.**

STEP 1: Learn about diabetes.

What is diabetes?

There are three main types of diabetes:

- **Type 1 diabetes** – Your body does not make insulin. This is a problem because you need insulin to take the sugar (glucose) from the foods you eat and turn it into energy for your body. You need to take insulin every day to live.
- **Type 2 diabetes** – Your body does not make or use insulin well. You may need to take pills or insulin to help control your diabetes. Type 2 is the most common type of diabetes.
- **Gestational (jest-TAY-shun-al) diabetes** – Some women get this kind of diabetes when they are pregnant. Most of the time, it goes away after the baby is born. But even if it goes away, these women and their children have a greater chance of getting diabetes later in life.

You are the most important member of your health care team.

You are the one who manages your diabetes day by day. Talk to your doctor about how you can best care for your diabetes to stay healthy. Some others who can help are:

- dentist
- diabetes doctor
- diabetes educator
- dietitian
- eye doctor
- foot doctor
- friends and family
- mental health counselor
- nurse
- nurse practitioner
- pharmacist
- social worker

How to learn more about diabetes.

- Take classes to learn more about living with diabetes. To find a class, check with your health care team, hospital, or area health clinic. You can also search online.
- Join a support group — in-person or online — to get peer support with managing your diabetes.
- Read about diabetes online. Go to www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes

Take diabetes seriously.

You may have heard people say they have "a touch of diabetes" or that their "sugar is a little high." These words suggest that diabetes is not a serious disease. That is **not** correct. Diabetes is **serious,** but you can learn to manage it.

People with diabetes need to make healthy food choices, stay at or get to a healthy weight, move more every day, and take their medicine even when they feel good. It's a lot to do. **It's not easy, but it's worth it!**

Why take care of your diabetes?

Taking care of yourself and your diabetes can help you feel good today and in the future. When your blood sugar (glucose) is close to normal, you are likely to:

- have more energy
- be less tired and thirsty
- need to pass urine less often
- heal better
- have fewer skin or bladder infections

You will also have less chance of having health problems caused by diabetes such as:

- heart attack or stroke
- eye problems that can lead to trouble seeing or going blind
- pain, tingling, or numbness in your hands and feet, also called nerve damage
- kidney problems that can cause your kidneys to stop working
- teeth and gum problems

Actions you can take

- ✓ **Ask your health care team what type of diabetes you have.**
- ✓ **Learn where you can go for support.**
- ✓ **Learn how caring for your diabetes helps you feel good today and in the future.**

STEP 2:
Know your diabetes ABCs.

Talk to your health care team about how to manage your **A**1C, **B**lood pressure, and **C**holesterol. This can help lower your chances of having a heart attack, stroke, or other diabetes problems.

A for the A1C test (A-one-C).

What is it?

The A1C is a blood test that measures your average blood sugar level over the past three months. It is different from the blood sugar checks you do each day.

Why is it important?

You need to know your blood sugar levels over time. You don't want those numbers to get too high. High levels of blood sugar can hurt your heart, blood vessels, kidneys, feet, and eyes.

What is the A1C goal?

The A1C goal for many people with diabetes is below 7. It may be different for you. Ask what your goal should be.

B for Blood pressure.

What is it?

Blood pressure is the force of your blood against the wall of your blood vessels.

Why is it important?

If your blood pressure gets too high, it makes your heart work too hard. It can cause a heart attack, stroke, and damage your kidneys and eyes.

What is the blood pressure goal?

The blood pressure goal for most people with diabetes is below 140/90. It may be different for you. Ask what your goal should be.

C for Cholesterol (ko-LESS-tuh-ruhl).

What is it?

There are two kinds of cholesterol in your blood: LDL and HDL.

LDL or "bad" cholesterol can build up and clog your blood vessels. It can cause a heart attack or stroke.

HDL or "good" cholesterol helps remove the "bad" cholesterol from your blood vessels.

What are the LDL and HDL goals?

Ask what your cholesterol numbers should be. Your goals may be different from other people. If you are over 40 years of age, you may need to take a statin drug for heart health.

Actions you can take

- ✓ **Ask your health care team:**
  - **what your A1C, blood pressure, and cholesterol numbers are and what they should be. Your ABC goals will depend on how long you have had diabetes, other health problems, and how hard your diabetes is to manage.**
  - **what you can do to reach your ABC goals**
- ✓ **Write down your numbers on the record at the back of this booklet to track your progress.**

STEP 3:
Learn how to live with diabetes.

It is common to feel overwhelmed, sad, or angry when you are living with diabetes. You may know the steps you should take to stay healthy, but have trouble sticking with your plan over time. This section has tips on how to cope with your diabetes, eat well, and be active.

Cope with your diabetes.

- Stress can raise your blood sugar. Learn ways to lower your stress. Try deep breathing, gardening, taking a walk, meditating, working on your hobby, or listening to your favorite music.
- Ask for help if you feel down. A mental health counselor, support group, member of the clergy, friend, or family member who will listen to your concerns may help you feel better.

Eat well.

- Make a diabetes meal plan with help from your health care team.
- Choose foods that are lower in calories, saturated fat, trans fat, sugar, and salt.
- Eat foods with more fiber, such as whole grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice, or pasta.
- Choose foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, bread and cereals, and low-fat or skim milk and cheese.
- Drink water instead of juice and regular soda.

Portion size matters.

Reduce portion sizes and fill your plate like this.

- When eating a meal, fill half of your plate with fruits and vegetables, one quarter with a lean protein, such as beans, or chicken or turkey without the skin, and one quarter with a whole grain, such as brown rice or whole wheat pasta.

Be active.

- Set a goal to be more active most days of the week. Start slow by taking 10 minute walks, 3 times a day.
- Twice a week, work to increase your muscle strength. Use stretch bands, do yoga, heavy gardening (digging and planting with tools), or try push-ups.
- Stay at or get to a healthy weight by using your meal plan and moving more.

Know what to do every day.

- Take your medicines for diabetes and any other health problems even when you feel good. Ask your doctor if you need aspirin to prevent a heart attack or stroke. Tell your doctor if you cannot afford your medicines or if you have any side effects.

- Check your feet every day for cuts, blisters, red spots, and swelling. Call your health care team right away about any sores that do not go away.
- Brush your teeth and floss every day to keep your mouth, teeth, and gums healthy.
- Stop smoking. Ask for help to quit. Call 1-800-QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669).
- Keep track of your blood sugar. You may want to check it one or more times a day. Use the card at the back of this booklet to keep a record of your blood sugar numbers. Be sure to talk about it with your health care team.
- Check your blood pressure if your doctor advises and keep a record of it.

Talk to your health care team.

- Ask your doctor if you have any questions about your diabetes.
- Report any changes in your health.

Actions you can take

- ✓ **Ask for a healthy meal plan.**
- ✓ **Ask about ways to be more active.**
- ✓ **Ask how and when to test your blood sugar and how to use the results to manage your diabetes.**
- ✓ **Use these tips to help with your self-care.**
- ✓ **Discuss how your diabetes plan is working for you each time you visit your health care team.**

STEP 4:
Get routine care to stay healthy.

See your health care team **at least twice a year** to find and treat any problems early.

At each visit, be sure you have a:

- blood pressure check
- foot check
- weight check
- review of your self-care plan

Two times each year, have an:

- A1C test. It may be checked more often if it is over 7.

Once each year, be sure you have a:

- cholesterol test
- complete foot exam
- dental exam to check teeth and gums
- dilated eye exam to check for eye problems
- flu shot
- urine and a blood test to check for kidney problems

At least once in your lifetime, get a:

- pneumonia (nu-mo-nya) shot
- hepatitis B (HEP-uh-TY-tiss) shot

Medicare and diabetes.

If you have Medicare, check to see how your plan covers diabetes care. Medicare covers some of the costs for:

- diabetes education
- diabetes supplies
- diabetes medicine
- visits with a dietitian
- special shoes, if you need them

Actions you can take

- ✓ **Ask your health care team about these and other tests you may need. Ask what your results mean.**
- ✓ **Write down the date and time of your next visit.**
- ✓ **Use the card at the back of this booklet to keep a record of your diabetes care.**
- ✓ **If you have Medicare, check your plan.**

Things to Remember:

- You are the most important member of your health care team.
- Follow the four steps in this booklet to help you learn how to manage your diabetes.
- Learn how to reach your diabetes ABC goals.
- Ask your health care team for help.

My Diabetes Care Record

How to use the record.

First read the shaded bar across the page. This tells you:

- the name of the test or check-up
- how often to get the test or check-up
- what your personal goal is (for A1C, blood pressure, and cholesterol)

Then, write down the date and results for each test or check-up you get. Take this card with you on your health care visits. Show it to your health care team. Talk about your goals and how you are doing.

A1C – At least twice each year				**My goal: ___**
Date				
Result				
Blood Pressure (BP) – At each visit				**My goal: ___**
Date				
Result				
Cholesterol – Once each year				**My goal: ___**
Date				
Result				

TEAR HERE

My Diabetes Care Record

How to use the record.

Use this page to write down the date and results of each test, exam, or shot.

Each Visit	Date	Result
Foot check		
Review self-care plan		
Weight check		
Review medicines		
Once a Year	**Date**	**Result**
Dental exam		
Dilated eye exam		
Complete foot exam		
Flu shot		
Kidney check		
At least Once	**Date**	**Result**
Pneumonia shot		
Hepatitis B shot		

TEAR HERE

Self Checks of Blood Sugar

How to use this card.

This card has three sections. Each section tells you when to check your blood sugar: before each meal, 1 to 2 hours after each meal, and at bedtime. Each time you check your blood sugar, write down the date, time, and results. Take this card with you on your health care visits. Show it to your health care team. Talk about your goals and how you are doing.

Each Check	Date	Time	Result
My blood sugar before meals: Usual goal 80 to 130* My goal: _____			
My blood sugar 1–2 hours after meals: Usual goal below 180* My goal: _____			
My blood sugar at bedtime: Usual goal 110 to 150* My goal: _____			

*Your blood sugar goals may be different if you are an older adult (over 65) and have had diabetes a long time. They may be different if you have other health problems like heart disease, or your blood sugar often gets too low.

TEAR HERE

Notes:

TEAR HERE

To learn more:

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases
1-800-860-8747
www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
1-800-877-1600
www.eatright.org

American Association of Diabetes Educators
1-800-338-3633
www.diabeteseducator.org

American Diabetes Association
1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383)
www.diabetes.org

American Heart Association
1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721)
www.heart.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)
www.cdc.gov/diabetes

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)
www.medicare.gov

JDRF
1-800-533-CURE (1-800-533-2873)
www.jdrf.org

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases
Health Information Center
1-800-860-8747
TTY: 1-866-569-1162
www.niddk.nih.gov

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The NIDDK would like to thank Martha M. Funnell, MS, RN, CDE of the Michigan Diabetes Research and Training Center for reviewing this publication.

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NIH Publication No. 16–5492

January 2016

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