

CHAPTER SEVEN



DIABETES SELF MANAGEMENT

You must form a close relationship with your health care provider. You and your physician and your diabetes educators must work together as a team to manage your diabetes.

Your responsibilities at home include:

- Keeping accurate records of blood sugar and bringing this record to your doctor appointments.
- Weighing yourself as instructed by your doctor, and keeping records as requested.
- Taking care of your feet everyday.
- Following your diet.
- Exercising.
- Taking your medicine as ordered.
- Informing your doctor/diabetes educator of any problems managing your diabetes.

WHAT YOUR DOCTOR CAN DO FOR YOU:

Exam:

- Look at your feet (every visit)
- Check your mouth and teeth (every visit)
- Take your blood pressure (every visit)
- Check your weight (every visit)

Review:

- Daily blood glucose records (every visit)
- Episodes of low and high blood sugars (every visit)
- Current medications (every visit)
- Diet (every visit)

Order lab work:

- HbA1c (a special diabetes test) every 3-6 months
- Urinalysis/Microalbuminuria (protein in urine) once a year
- Lipid profile including cholesterol/HDL/LDL/triglycerides (measures fats in the blood) once a year

Treatment:

- Flu shot (once a year)
- Pneumococcal shot (once every 5 to 7 years)

Order appropriate referrals:

- Dilated eye exam by ophthalmologist/optometrist (eye doctor) once a year
- Podiatrist (foot doctor)
- Endocrinologist (specialized diabetes doctor)
- Nephrologist (kidney doctor)
- Diabetes Educator
- Dietitian
- Behavioral therapy
- Help to stop smoking
- Help to control your weight

Always remember, you are responsible for understanding your diabetes.

Discuss the following with your doctor or diabetes educator if you do not understand or have questions about:

- Smoking counseling
- Medications
- Nutrition therapy
- Physical activity
- Weight management
- Problems
- Hypoglycemia (low blood sugar)
- Sick day rules
- Stress and family issues
- Foot care

COPING WITH STRESS

WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is the way we respond to a situation. Not everyone responds the same. Each of us has different things that cause us stress. Good things (marriage or retirement) as well as bad or scary things (hearing strange noises or losing your wallet) can be stressful.



Some people find that they feel less able to deal with stress when they learn they have diabetes. Their strength for dealing with daily events is now being used up trying to deal with diabetes.

Name things that have caused you stress (illness or death in the family, school graduation, birth of a child, new job, retirement, or holidays).

Stress can cause you to feel jumpy, nervousness, a fast heart beat, an upset stomach, or rapid breathing. Sometimes the symptoms of stress and low blood sugar are similar. Make sure you know the difference.

Stress causes much wear and tear on your body. This wear and tear can cause health problems. It will make it hard for you to control your diabetes.

Have you noticed that your blood sugar level is affected by stress? Stress increases your heart rate and blood pressure and may cause your blood sugar to rise.

Stress can also cause you to eat too much. Some people eat too little causing low blood sugar. The wear and tear of stress may actually cause you to feel sick (tired, aches and pains, headaches, and shortness of breath).

How do you cope with stress?

MANAGEMENT TIPS

TIPS FOR LOWERING YOUR STRESS

The best way to lower your stress is to use up the stress energy in some way.



- Exercise helps to use up the stress energy in a positive way. Exercise also increases overall fitness, which helps with long-term stress. (Walking, biking, or dancing)
- Deep breathing can relieve tension.
- Keep your sense of humor. Laughter helps you decrease stress.
- Support groups. Sometimes being with people who have similar problems helps to reduce stress. Talking about problems can help you to solve them.
- If you want extra help to handle stress, ask for professional help. Your health care team can tell you about resources.
- Eat healthy meals and take medications as directed.
- See your doctor at least two times a year.
- Talk to your friends and family about your worries. Talking about problems can help you solve them.

DEEP BREATHING EXERCISE:

Let's take 5 minutes and practice a deep breathing exercise.

First, make yourself comfortable. It helps if you close your eyes, but you do not have to.

Now take a deep breath in through your nose, fully expanding your lungs. Then breathe out through your mouth slowly.

As you breathe out you can feel the tension leave your body. Continue to take nice long deep breaths in through your nose and then out through your mouth.

You will feel more and more relaxed as you continue to take nice long deep breaths.



FOOT, SKIN, AND DENTAL

FOOT CARE/SKIN CARE

Many people with diabetes lose the feeling in their feet. Therefore, they may not know they have an injury until a wound becomes a problem. Your family may need to help you care for your feet.

Protect your feet!

- Check your feet every day for cuts, open sores, blisters, redness, swelling, dry skin, cracking calluses, or toenail problems.
- Keep your feet clean and dry, especially between the toes.
- Use lotion if your skin is too dry, but not between your toes!
- Have your feet checked by a doctor.
- Wear shoes or slippers at all times.
- Wear comfortable shoes that fit well.
- Wear loose fitting socks or stockings.
- Cut toenails straight across.
- Avoid extreme heat and cold; check the temperature of bath water with your arm before getting in the tub.

DENTAL CARE

Poorly controlled blood sugar can cause mouth problems like gum disease and infections.

How to prevent gum disease:

- Check your blood sugars and keep them in a good range.
- Brush your teeth at least twice a day.
- Use dental floss once a day to remove bacteria from between your teeth.
- Have your teeth cleaned and checked by the dentist at least every 6 months.
- Denture wearers also need to see the dentist to check for gum damage.

Warning signs of dental problems:

- Bleeding gums when you brush or eat.
- Red, swollen, or tender gums.
- Gums that have pulled away from your teeth.
- Pus appears between your teeth and gums when the gums are touched.
- Any change in the way your teeth/dentures fit together when you bite.
- Bad breath or a bad taste in your mouth all the time.

DIABETES AND PREGNANCY

CARE FOR PREGNANT WOMEN WITH DIABETES

To prevent problems in pregnancy for the woman with diabetes, good care and good blood sugars need to begin before the pregnancy occurs. Talk to your health care team if you are thinking about having a baby.

The woman with diabetes needs to work closely with her health care team to make sure she is prepared for having a baby.

Having a baby for the woman with diabetes is not without risk. There are risks both to herself and to the baby. Staying in close contact with the doctors and nurses on your health care team can help decrease these risks.

Your health care team will ask you to monitor blood sugars often, watch your diet carefully, have lab work done frequently, and have regular office visits.

Gestational diabetes:

Gestational diabetes occurs when a pregnant woman without diabetes develops high blood sugar. The blood sugars return to normal after the pregnancy. Gestational diabetes increases the risk for developing diabetes later in life.

Woman at risk for having diabetes during pregnancy:

- More than 25 years old
- Overweight before pregnancy
- Family members with diabetes
- Previous births more than 9 pounds

The health care team will closely monitor the pregnant woman with diabetes. Management will include diet, exercise, medication, and self-monitoring of blood sugar.

Children born to mothers with diabetes should be closely monitored. They may be at risk of becoming overweight and having high blood sugar.



DIABETES AND ILLNESS

WHAT DO I DO WHEN I AM SICK?

When you are sick with a cold, the flu, or a fever your blood sugar may go up. To stay out of the hospital, you need to take care of your illness and your diabetes. Here are some guidelines to help you stay out of the hospital.

- Take the same amount of insulin or diabetes pills as you usually do. Illness usually makes blood sugars go up. You will need the diabetes medicine to help keep blood sugars down even if you can't eat your regular meals.
- Check your blood sugar at least 4 times a day. Make sure you write down the results.
- If your blood sugar is over 250 mg/dl, you need to check your urine for ketones. The body makes ketones if you are not getting enough insulin in your body (either by shots, with the help of pills, or making it on your own). You can use ketone testing strips that you buy at the drug store.
- Other signs of illness include:
 - Diarrhea
 - Vomiting

- Urinating a lot more than usual
- Stomach pains
- Fruity breath (smells like fingernail polish)
- Fast breathing
- If you have any of these symptoms, **CALL YOUR DOCTOR AT ONCE.**

- If you call the doctor, tell him or her:
 - Any signs of illness you have
 - Your blood sugar results
 - If you have any ketones in your urine
 - Your temperature
 - When you last took your diabetes medicine
 - How much diabetes medicine you took
 - What type of diabetes medicine you took
 - How long you have been ill

- If you can, eat your usual meals and snacks. Try to drink at least 1/2 cup of low calorie liquids every hour. If you can't eat solid food, eat or drink at least 3 or 4 portions (1/2 cup each) of these when you usually would eat a meal or snack:
 - Fruit juice
 - Regular ginger ale or soda pop
 - Regular popsicles
 - Regular jello
 - Soup

- If your blood sugar goes up to 250 mg/dl or more, change to sugar-free liquids, such as:
 - Water
 - Tea with no sugar
 - Broth
 - Diet soda pop or diet drinks
 - Ice chips
 - Sugar-free popsicles
 - Sugar-free jello
- You never know when you'll get sick. When you do get sick, you won't feel like going to the store. You need to always have these things on hand:
 - Diabetes medicines (insulin, syringes, and/or pills)
 - Blood sugar testing strips
 - Thermometer
 - Diet soda pop or fruit juice
 - One box each of diet jello and regular jello
 - Instant broth
 - Popsicles (regular and diet)

WHEN DO I NEED TO CALL THE DOCTOR?

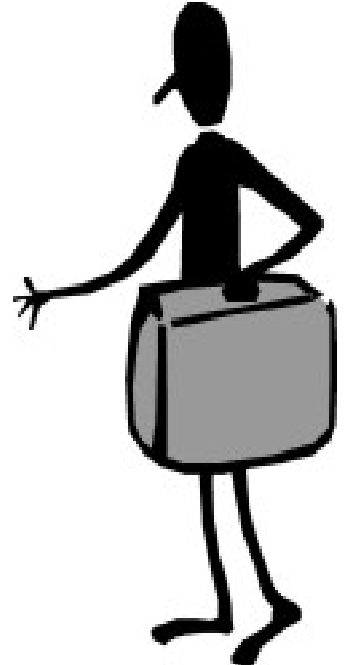
- If you have an infection
- If you can not keep fluids down
- If you throw up more than once
- If you have diarrhea
- If you feel sleepier than usual
- If you have trouble breathing
- If you can not think clearly
- If your blood sugar is more than 250 for 2 tests in a row



WHAT DO I DO FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS AND WHEN I TRAVEL?

Yes, people with diabetes can still go out to dinner and travel on vacation. Here are some helpful hints:

- Follow your diet as closely as possible. Always carry a snack.
- Limit the amount of beer, wine, or alcohol you drink. Ask your doctor or diabetes educator how much is safe for you to drink. Use club soda with mixed drinks to keep the carbohydrates down.



- If you are taking a long car trip, try to do most of the driving early in the day. Test your blood sugar more frequently if you get off your usual schedule. Always carry snacks.
- If you are traveling by plane, ask for a meal for people with diabetes ahead of time. Find out when the meal will be served so you can take your medicine. Remember to always carry a snack. Keep your medicine and blood testing supplies with you as a carry on. Ask your doctor about adjusting dosages of medicine (especially insulin) if you will be traveling to a different time zone.
- If you use insulin, store it in an insulated container to keep it from freezing or getting too hot. Take extra needles, insulin, and blood test strips when you travel in case of loss or breakage.
- Take along a note from your doctor stating you have diabetes and what medicines you are taking.
- **Enjoy your vacation but don't forget to continue checking your blood sugars.**

YOUR NOTES