

T A K I N G  
C H A R G E  
O F Y O U R H E A L T H



CONTROLLING DIABETES ONE DAY AT A TIME



TEXAS DIABETES  
COUNCIL

**You can control your diabetes  
one day at a time by:**

**Eating a variety of healthy foods**

**Checking your blood sugar**

**Taking medication your doctor  
prescribes at the right time**

**Being physically active each day**

**Losing weight (if you need to)**

**Following your doctor's advice**



## Table of Contents

What's Your Type? .....	2
Handling Low Blood Sugar.....	3
Eating Right .....	4
If You Get Sick.....	5
Boost Your Activity .....	6
Take Charge of Your Health.....	6-9
Support .....	10
Goals .....	12
Free Diabetes Materials.....	13
Daily Food and Medicine Record.....	14



## MANAGING DIABETES STARTS TODAY

*Taking simple steps such as eating right, exercising, and caring for your body will help you manage your disease and stay healthy.*

If you've just been diagnosed with diabetes, you're trying to understand a lot of new information. Diabetes is a serious disease, but many people with diabetes live long, normal lives. With healthy habits, you can control the disease and continue doing the things you like to do.

## WHAT'S YOUR TYPE?

Your doctor probably already told you that there are two main types of diabetes, called type 1 and type 2. Both affect a person's ability to produce and use insulin, the hormone that controls glucose (sugar). Diabetes causes a build-up of sugar in the blood and leaves your cells without the fuel they need. Over time, high blood sugar levels can damage blood vessels and hurt your eyes, kidneys, nerves, and heart.

**Type 1 Diabetes.** With type 1 diabetes, your body does not make insulin. It requires daily insulin shots or an insulin pump. Your nurse will teach you how to give yourself the shots and help you establish a schedule that coordinates your insulin shots and mealtimes.

**Type 2 Diabetes.** With type 2 diabetes, your body doesn't make enough insulin or the cells are unable to use the insulin that is made. Type 2 diabetes is treated with medications (pills), though many people with type 2 diabetes also take insulin.

### **Whichever medications you take, remember to:**

**Follow your doctor's instructions.** Ask your doctor when and how often to check your blood sugar and take your medicine. Be sure to take the right amount of medicine at the right time every day, even if you are sick.

**Try to eat at the same time every day.** Because your medicine helps you use the food you eat, it works best if you follow a regular mealtime schedule. If you forget to eat or wait too long to eat, your blood sugar may drop drastically.

## HANDLING LOW BLOOD SUGAR

*Even if you take your medicine regularly, at some point you will probably find yourself with low blood sugar. This can happen if you forget to eat, or if you take too much medicine.*

**Low blood sugar will make you feel weak and dizzy.** You may start to shake. Other signs include sweating, numb lips, or a bad headache. If you don't take care of the problem right away, you may even faint. A person with low blood sugar may act like he/she is drunk.

**What should you do?** Drink half a cup of sweet juice, such as orange or apple. Or quickly eat two spoonfuls of sugar or six to seven small hard candies. Be prepared – you should always carry candies or sugar packets with you. Once your blood sugar is raised and you start to feel better, take time to rest. If it is near your regular mealtime, eat a meal.



*Drinking 4 ounces of orange juice can raise low blood sugar levels.*

**Recognize signs of trouble.** If you faint or if you are not able to eat or drink, you may need to go to the hospital for help. Call 9-1-1. Do not try to drive yourself anywhere.

**Let others know the warning signs.** If they know what to do, they can call an ambulance and get help for you.

**Call your doctor.** If you have a low blood sugar spell, be sure to tell your doctor. He or she may need to change your medication.

**Wear a diabetes alert bracelet and carry a card in your wallet or purse.** A diabetes bracelet and card let others know about your condition.





## EATING HABITS

*Balanced eating is one of the most important things you can do to feel good and control your diabetes.*

**Small, positive changes can make a big difference. Try to:**

**Set a schedule.** To keep your blood sugar at an even level, eat three meals a day. Your dietitian also may recommend a snack in the afternoon and at bedtime. Try to eat at the same time each day, and don't skip meals.

**Don't overeat.** Besides making you feel bad, overeating may cause your blood sugar levels to go too high. Eat sensible portions, eat slowly, and stop eating before you feel full.

**Limit fatty foods, sugars, and sweets.** Your dietitian can provide meal plans and recipes to help you eat enough vegetables and whole grains.

**Drink water or sugar-free drinks.** Avoid regular sodas and other drinks (such as fruit drinks and sweetened tea) that have added sugar.

**Learn new ways to cook.** You don't have to give up favorite foods; you may have to change the recipes to cut down on fats and sugars. Try new ways of cooking, such as broiling and poaching meats instead of pan-frying them, or steaming vegetables instead of cooking them in butter or oil.

**Maintain a healthy weight.** Ask your doctor if your weight is right for your height and build. If you are overweight, set realistic goals to get to a healthy weight.

# IF YOU GET SICK

*If you take diabetes medicines, take extra care when you have an illness, like an infection, the flu, a sore throat, or a bad cold.*









## Remember to:

**Call your doctor or clinic.** If your cold or flu is not better after one day, call your health care provider. If you are too sick to eat or have vomiting or diarrhea, your doctor may need to change your insulin or medications.

**Ask your doctor or pharmacist about cold or flu medicines.** Remind them about your diabetes. Some medicines (even those sold without a prescription) may affect you differently or interfere with your insulin.

**Drink plenty of fluids.** Drink a lot of water. If you are not eating, you may have regular soft drinks (not diet) and juice. Sip a little at a time if you feel sick to your stomach.

## If you cannot eat regular food, you could try:

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
<b>1/3 cup apple juice</b>	<b>1/3 cup cranberry juice</b>	<b>1/4 cup grape juice</b>
		
<b>1/2 cup lemon-lime soda</b>	<b>and 1 cup of gelatin</b>	<b>1/2 cup lemon-lime soda</b>
		
<b>and 1/2 cup gelatin</b>		<b>and 1 cup gelatin</b>
		

*Broth is another clear liquid that is easy on the stomach.  
While you are sick, avoid citrus juices.*



## BOOST YOUR ACTIVITY

*Being active will help you feel better, control your blood sugar, and help you avoid more health problems.*

### **Get started today, and remember to:**

**Start slowly.** Talk to your doctor or nurse before becoming active. Mild exercise, such as walking, working in the garden, or dancing, is a good way to start. Begin with a few minutes of activity each day. Add a few extra minutes as you get stronger.

**Choose an activity that you enjoy.** The more fun it is, the more likely you are to do it every day. Get a friend or family member to exercise with you.

**Be active every day.** It is better to walk for 10 to 20 minutes every day than for an hour once a week.

**Stop for pain.** If you feel pain, slow down or stop until the pain goes away. If it comes back, talk to your doctor or nurse before you exercise again.

**Step it up.** Talk to your doctor or nurse about increasing the amount you exercise, how much is safe for you, and how much you should eat before you exercise.



*Remember to consult your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.*

## TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR HEALTH

People who have diabetes are more likely to develop problems such as heart disease, strokes, kidney damage, infections, and eye problems. But there are practical steps you can take each day to protect your health and live well for years to come.



# YOUR HEART

High blood sugar harms blood vessels, which can cause heart problems. Heart and blood flow problems are made worse by smoking, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.

## Take charge:

**Check your blood pressure.** Many drug stores have free machines to check your blood pressure. If your blood pressure is higher than 130/80, talk to your doctor.

## Eat low-salt, low-fat foods.

This habit helps to keep your blood pressure and cholesterol down.

**Get some exercise most days of the week.** Exercise improves blood flow, lowers blood pressure, and can lower cholesterol.

**Lose weight if you are too heavy.** Dropping even a few pounds will help keep your heart from working too hard. If you're not sure where to start, ask your doctor or dietitian for a plan to help you lose weight.

**Relax.** Staying calm will help keep your blood pressure and blood sugar under control.

**Don't smoke.** If you do smoke, now is a great time to quit.

**Take your medicine.** If you are on medication to lower your blood pressure or cholesterol, take it every day. Ask your doctor about taking aspirin for your heart.

**See your doctor if you have problems.** Make an appointment to see your doctor if you have cramps or pain in your legs or feet, your blood pressure is more than 130/80, you are short of breath after a little activity, or you have a lot of swelling in your feet.



*It's important to eat foods and beverages that are low in sodium (salt) to keep your blood pressure under control.*



## YOUR KIDNEYS

Diabetes can damage the small blood vessels in the kidneys. This prevents them from clearing the waste out of your blood. If your kidneys stop working, you will need to have your blood cleaned by a machine (called dialysis) or have a kidney transplant.

### **Take charge:**

**Keep your A1c at goal level.** An A1c blood test measures your average blood sugar control over the past 2 to 3 months. Your doctor will set a goal for what your A1c level should be.

**Keep blood pressure lower than 130/80.** If it gets higher, call your doctor.

**Talk to your doctor.** Ask about a urine test (microalbumin) at least once a year and about medicines and food that can protect your kidneys.

## YOUR FEET

Because diabetes affects nerves, it can make it hard to feel pain in your feet and legs. You may not know if or when you have been hurt. Diabetes can also cause problems with circulation. This makes it hard for cuts and sores to heal and can cause infection.

### **Take charge:**

**Call your doctor if you see signs of trouble.** Pain or swelling in your feet, a cut or burn that becomes red or sore, calluses, corns, and in-grown toenails can lead to bigger problems.



*Always check your feet  
before going to bed.*

**Exercise.** Staying active improves blood flow to your legs and feet.

**Check your feet every day.** Look for cuts, sores, and blisters. Put lotion on dry spots to prevent cracks. Use a mirror to see the bottoms of your feet, or ask a family member or friend to help you.

**Keep your feet clean.** Wash your feet every day with mild soap and warm water. Test the water first to make sure it's not too hot. Dry your feet well, especially between your toes.

**Cut your toenails straight across.** Use clippers, not pointed scissors, and be careful not to cut the skin. Never cut corns and calluses. If you have hard or thick toenails, ask your doctor if a foot specialist should cut them for you.

**Always wear socks and shoes (not sandals).** Cotton socks help keep your feet dry. Comfortable shoes help your blood flow. Never go barefoot.

**Check your shoes.** Before you put on your shoes, feel around inside or shake the shoe to find any small objects that could cut your feet.

## YOUR EYES

Diabetes can harm the blood vessels in your eyes. This can lead to eye disease and even blindness. You can take steps to protect your vision.

### Take charge:

**Keep your blood sugar under control.** Managing your blood sugar protects the sensitive blood vessels in your eyes.

**See the eye doctor (ophthalmologist or optometrist) once a year.** Have an eye exam every year, even if your eyes are not bothering you. Some types of eye disease do not have early warning signs.

**Watch for problems.** Report blurry vision, flashes of light in your eyes, blind spots, “things” floating in front of your eyes, or other changes in your vision to your doctor.

**Don't use tobacco.** Smoking can cause high blood pressure, which can make eye problems worse.



## SUPPORT

*What you can do when a friend, co-worker, or loved one is diagnosed with diabetes.*

Managing diabetes can be hard, but your support will help your friend or family member live a healthier life. To protect their health for the long term, people who have diabetes must often make big changes around daily diet and exercise. It's easier to adopt new habits if friends and family members take part.

### **To help, you can:**

**Learn more about diabetes.** Know how to recognize signs of a low blood sugar “crash,” and practice what to do if your friend or loved one has one.

**Keep sweets and high-fat foods out of the house.** Buy and cook foods that are low in fat and sugars and high in fiber. This will help everyone in your household stay healthy.

**Exercise together.** Go along for a walk or other form of exercise that you both enjoy. Even if you don't have diabetes, you will enjoy the benefits of exercise.

**Be patient.** Your loved one may feel sad or angry about having diabetes. Until his or her blood sugar is in control, your friend may be grumpy or tired. Good nutrition, exercise, and medications will help this get better.

**Be generous with praise.** It's normal to be worried about your loved one's health, but try not to nag. Instead, praise your friend when he or she makes smart choices about eating or exercise.

**Don't skip doctor appointments.** Diabetes is a life-long disease that requires careful monitoring. Make sure that your loved one has regular checkups and makes special appointments if there is ever a problem or concern.

**Let them know you care.** When people feel loved, they take better care of themselves.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## PATIENT GOALS

*Ask your doctor, nurse, or other healthcare provider to help you set goals to stay healthy.*

	Current	Goal / Date	Goal / Date
Weight			
A1c			
Blood Pressure			
Cholesterol (Total, LDL)			

## HEALTH PLAN

*Ask your doctor, nurse, or other healthcare provider to help you review your diet, plan an exercise routine, and go over what medicines you should take and when.*

Food	
Exercise	
Medicine	

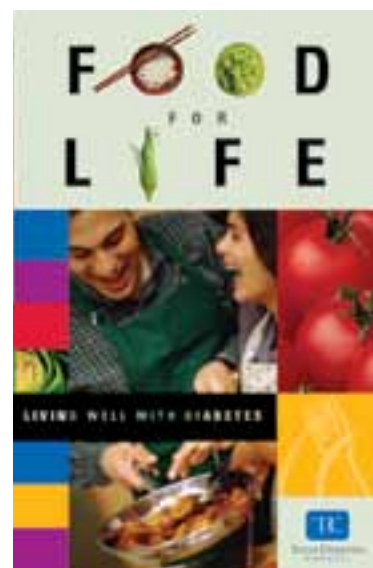




## FREE DIABETES MATERIALS

*Patient education materials from the Texas Diabetes Council in English and Spanish include:*

- *You Have the Power: Controlling Diabetes One Day at a Time (DVD)*, self-management tips for people who have type 2 diabetes (also available in Vietnamese and Mandarin Chinese)
- *Diabetes Card*, a wallet-size card to list necessary medical tests and record results
- *Living with Diabetes*, a brochure that includes advice for managing diabetes and to-do lists for before, during, and after a doctor visit
- *Food for Life: Living Well with Diabetes*, a booklet describing healthy eating habits and food choices
- *Gestational Diabetes*, a booklet to help pregnant women understand this type of diabetes
- *Give Your Child A Healthy Headstart*, a brochure for parents to help their children manage their weight, exercise, and develop healthy habits to prevent obesity and type 2 diabetes



**To order, visit [www.texasdiabetescouncil.org](http://www.texasdiabetescouncil.org), or call 1-888-963-7111 extension 7490 (a free call), for more information.**





Texas Diabetes Council MC 1965  
Texas Department of State Health Services  
P.O. Box 149347 Austin, tx 78714-9347  
[www.texasdiabetescouncil.org](http://www.texasdiabetescouncil.org)  
1-888-963-7111 Ext. 7490

