

Diabetes Patient & Caregiver Education Worksheet

Understand Diabetes. Track changes. Prepare for your next appointment.

A practical resource for patients and caregivers.

Aging Parent Resource Hub
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UNDERSTANDING DIABETES

What Is Diabetes?

Diabetes occurs when your body has difficulty keeping blood glucose (blood sugar) at a healthy level.

Glucose provides your body with energy. **Insulin** is a hormone that helps glucose move from your bloodstream into your cells so it can be used for energy.

When you have diabetes, your body may not make enough insulin, may not use insulin effectively, or both. This can cause blood sugar levels to become too high.

Over time, consistently high blood sugar can damage blood vessels and nerves and increase the risk of problems involving the **heart, kidneys, eyes, nerves, and feet**.

Know Your Blood Sugar

Your healthcare provider may ask you to check your blood sugar at home.

Your provider should tell you:

My target blood sugar range: _____

When I should check my blood sugar: _____

When I should call my provider: _____

Keep a record of your readings if your healthcare provider recommends monitoring them.

My Blood Sugar Log

Date	Time	Blood Sugar	Before/After Meal Notes

Your individual blood sugar goals may be different from someone else's. Follow the targets provided by your healthcare team.

Take Your Medications as Prescribed

Diabetes medications help control blood sugar and may include pills, injections, insulin, or other medications.

Important Medication Tips

- Take medications exactly as prescribed.
- Don't stop insulin or other diabetes medications without talking with your healthcare provider.
- Keep an updated medication list.
- Tell your provider if you are experiencing side effects.
- Let your healthcare team know if medications are difficult to afford.
- Ask what you should do if you miss a dose.

My diabetes medications:

Pay Attention to Low Blood Sugar

Low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) can happen with some diabetes medications, particularly insulin and certain other medicines.

Possible symptoms include:

- Shakiness
- Sweating
- Hunger
- Fast heartbeat
- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Irritability or anxiety
- Confusion
- Difficulty concentrating

Ask your healthcare provider what blood sugar level is considered too low for you and exactly how they want you to treat it.

If you have severe symptoms, become confused, lose consciousness, have a seizure, or cannot safely treat yourself, **seek emergency medical assistance.**

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Pay Attention to High Blood Sugar

High blood sugar can cause symptoms such as:

- Increased thirst
- Frequent urination
- Fatigue
- Blurred vision
- Headache
- Difficulty concentrating

Very high blood sugar can become dangerous.

Ask your healthcare provider:

At what blood sugar level should I call your office?

At what level should I seek urgent medical attention?

Take Care of Your Feet

Diabetes can damage nerves and reduce blood flow to the feet, which can make injuries harder to notice and heal.

Check Your Feet Regularly

Look for:

- ☐ Cuts
- ☐ Blisters
- ☐ Sores
- ☐ Redness
- ☐ Swelling
- ☐ Calluses
- ☐ Cracks in the skin
- ☐ Drainage
- ☐ Changes in color
- ☐ Areas that feel numb or painful

Don't ignore a foot injury simply because it doesn't hurt. **Nerve damage can reduce your ability to feel an injury.**

Tell your healthcare provider about sores, wounds, infections, or changes that are not healing normally.

Ask your provider how often you should have your feet professionally examined.

Protect Your Eyes

Diabetes can affect the blood vessels in the eyes and may lead to vision problems.

Keep recommended **diabetic eye examinations** even if your vision seems normal.

Tell your healthcare provider if you notice:

- New blurry vision
- Sudden changes in vision
- New floaters
- Dark spots
- Loss of vision

My next eye appointment: _____

Protect Your Kidneys

Diabetes can affect kidney function over time.

Your healthcare provider may monitor:

- Blood pressure
- Kidney blood tests
- Urine for protein/albumin
- Blood sugar control

Ask your provider:

How are my kidneys doing?

Do I need urine or blood testing?

Food & Nutrition

Healthy eating is an important part of diabetes management.

You don't necessarily have to eliminate all carbohydrates. Instead, work with your healthcare team to determine an eating pattern that works for you.

Helpful habits may include:

- Eating regular, balanced meals
- Watching portion sizes
- Choosing high-fiber foods
- Including vegetables and fruits appropriately
- Choosing lean sources of protein
- Limiting highly processed foods
- Limiting foods and drinks with large amounts of added sugar
- Drinking water when appropriate for your individual health needs

If you have other medical conditions that require dietary restrictions, ask your healthcare provider or a registered dietitian for individualized guidance.

Physical Activity

Physical activity can help improve blood sugar management and overall health.

However, the safest activity level depends on your individual health.

Ask your healthcare provider:

What type of exercise is safe for me?

How much activity should I aim for?

Are there activities I should avoid?

If you have significant heart, lung, joint, or other health concerns, discuss exercise with your healthcare team before starting a new exercise program.

Keep Your Healthcare Appointments

Diabetes management involves more than checking blood sugar.

Your healthcare team may monitor:

- ☐ A1C
- ☐ Blood pressure
- ☐ Cholesterol
- ☐ Kidney function
- ☐ Eye health
- ☐ Foot health
- ☐ Medications
- ☐ Weight
- ☐ Nutrition
- ☐ Other conditions that affect diabetes

Keeping regular appointments helps your healthcare team identify problems early and adjust your treatment when necessary.

Questions to Ask Your Healthcare Provider

- ☐ What type of diabetes do I have?
- ☐ What should my blood sugar goal be?
- ☐ What should my A1C goal be?
- ☐ How often should I check my blood sugar?
- ☐ What should I do if my blood sugar is too high?
- ☐ What should I do if my blood sugar is too low?
- ☐ What medications am I taking and why?
- ☐ Do I need insulin?
- ☐ How often should I have my A1C checked?
- ☐ Do I need a diabetic eye examination?
- ☐ How are my kidneys doing?
- ☐ How often should my feet be examined?
- ☐ What type of physical activity is safe for me?
- ☐ Should I see a dietitian or diabetes educator?

My Questions

My Diabetes Care Team

Primary Care Provider: _____

Phone: _____

Endocrinologist: _____

Phone: _____

Pharmacy: _____

Phone: _____

Eye Doctor: _____

Phone: _____

Podiatrist: _____

Phone: _____

Most Important

Diabetes is manageable, but it requires ongoing attention.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. If you don't understand your blood sugar readings, medications, diet, symptoms, or treatment plan, ask your healthcare team to explain it.

Do not change your medications or insulin doses based solely on this information. Follow the individualized instructions provided by your healthcare team.

If you experience **severe symptoms, significant confusion, loss of consciousness, seizures, severe difficulty breathing, or another medical emergency, seek emergency medical care.**

This information is for education and does not replace medical advice from your healthcare provider.