



# Diabetes: Be in Control

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## Living with Diabetes

Finding out you have diabetes can be scary!! Diabetes is a serious disease with many possible complications. However, research has shown that people with diabetes can live long, healthy, and happy lives. The secret is to take care of yourself and be in control. There are three areas of focus that can help you be in control: monitoring, diet, and exercise.

**Monitoring** your blood sugar can help you understand how different things affect your blood sugar level. Try to monitor your blood sugar at least as much as your doctor has recommended. People with type 2 diabetes should monitor blood sugar at least twice a day at different times throughout the day to assess the effects of their lifestyle on their blood sugar. Monitoring is important not

only to help make changes that will give more control over blood sugar, but to also help your doctor adjust medication to fit your needs.

Keeping records (date, time, and blood sugar level) is also a good idea. Records help you and your health care team know what has happened and how that has affected your current health. It will also help them to adjust your medication to work better.

**Diet** plays a vital part in controlling diabetes. There is no one way to eat with diabetes. How you eat will depend on treatment (insulin therapy or oral medication), exercise, and personal taste. This is the reason it is important to work with a dietitian for specific eating advice.

A general guide to eating is the Food Guide Pyramid. Re-

member that beans and starchy vegetables (potatoes, peas, corn, squash) are included in the grain group for people with diabetes. For those with type 2 diabetes and those overweight, it is recommended that you lose about 10-20 pounds. Research has shown this can make these people more sensitive to their own insulin.

**Exercise** lowers blood sugar levels without medication as well as reduces stress, lowers cholesterol and blood pressure, and helps weight loss. It is recommended that you get at least 20-30 minutes of continuous exercise 3 to 5 times a week for the best results. Research now shows that any increase in physical activity will help to improve health. Start out slow and choose activities that you enjoy. This will help you to stick with it.

## Day to Day Problems

The key with diabetes is to keep blood sugar within a certain range (80-180). When blood sugar is higher or lower than this range, there can be serious health problems.

### High Blood Sugar

Often times, it is hard to tell if your blood sugar is too high by the way you feel. This is the reason that it is important for you to monitor blood sugar levels on a regular basis.

There are many situations that can cause high blood sugar, like sickness, stress, forgetting to take insulin or diabetes pills, not exercising as usual, or eating too much. Symptoms of high blood sugar include hunger, thirst, frequent urination, blurry vision, itchy and dry skin, fruity-smelling breath, and vomiting.

Check blood sugar at any of the above times. If it is high, check urine for ketones. If you have moderate level ketones in your urine, use the correction

factor for adjusting insulin if you take insulin. Consult your doctor on how to get your blood sugar back into target range.

### Low Blood Sugar



Not everyone has the same symptoms for low blood sugar. Pay attention to how you feel when your blood sugar is low to learn your own symptoms.

**Common Symptoms:** shakiness, dizziness, nervousness, hunger, cold sweats, tiredness, confusion, anger, light-headedness, numbness, headaches, nightmares, sleeping problems.

**Causes:** taking too much diabetic medication, forgetting to eat or eating less than was planned for, obtaining more exercise than planned for, or during the night when you don't eat.

**When you think your blood sugar is too low:**

1. Test your blood sugar.
2. If it is less than 70, immediately eat or drink something with about 15 grams of carbohydrate (1/2 cup fruit juice or regular soda, 1 cup of milk, 5 Lifesavers). Glucose tablets are also available.
3. If you can't test your glucose and you think that it is low, treat yourself with 15 grams of carbohydrate anyway.
4. Wait 15 minutes and then test your blood sugar again. If it is still low (less than 70), then eat 15 more grams of carbohydrate.
5. Repeat testing and treating until blood sugar returns to normal (higher than 70).

