



# My Diabetes Toolkit.

Tips and tools to help manage diabetes.

# Living well with diabetes.

## ***“You have diabetes.”***

Maybe the words took your breath away. *Me? Really?* Or maybe they weren't such a surprise. It might run in your family.

Either way, you're not alone. According to the American Diabetes Association, 1.5 million Americans are diagnosed with diabetes every year.<sup>1</sup>

It might feel overwhelming to learn you're one of them. But there's good news: Learning about your condition may help you take steps toward feeling better and heading off complications.

This booklet is filled with tips and tools designed to help you make sense of your condition. So whether you've just been diagnosed or you need a quick refresher, use what you learn in this booklet — and from your doctor — to help set a solid foundation for your new life.\*

You've got this. Let's get started!

<sup>1</sup>American Diabetes Association. Statistics about diabetes. [diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/statistics](https://diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/statistics). Published March 22, 2018. Accessed May 9, 2018.

\*Check your benefit plan to see what services may be available to help you.



## **Type 1, type 2: What's the difference?**

Diabetes means your body has trouble making or using the hormone insulin. Your body needs insulin to help turn the food you eat into energy. If that doesn't happen, sugar (glucose) builds up in your blood. And that may lead to serious health problems.

**Type 1 diabetes** occurs when the body's immune system attacks the cells in the pancreas that make insulin. People with type 1 aren't able to make any insulin.

**Type 2 diabetes** occurs when the body isn't using insulin well. So over time, it's harder and harder to keep blood sugar levels in a healthy range.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

# What's inside.

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4  
3 ways to move forward.

---



9  
My daily blood sugar record.

---



14  
Dining out with diabetes.

---

5  
It takes a team.

---

10  
My medicine record.

---

15  
Have a sick-day plan.

---

6  
10 questions for your doctor.

---

11  
Stay well head-to-toe.

---

16  
Be ready for an emergency.

---

7  
Testing, testing, ABC.

---

12  
5 gentle skin care tips.

---

17  
Tips for travelers.

---

8  
My ABC goals.

13  
10 tasty foods to try in your diabetes meal plan.

18  
More resources for you.

# 3 ways to move forward.

*I can do this!*

Those are powerful words. And they're worth repeating to yourself if you're living with diabetes. You may have the power to lower your chances of serious heart, eye, kidney and other complications.

Where can you start? Here are 3 classic steps that may help protect your health.



## 1. Make smart food choices.

Your doctor or a dietitian may help you create a meal plan to help keep your blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol in a healthy range.

There's no one-size-fits-all diabetes diet. But in general:

- Build meals around a variety of healthy foods, such as veggies and fruits, whole grains, low-fat or fat-free dairy products, healthy fats (such as olive or canola oil), and lean meats or meat substitutes.
- Choose foods that are lower in calories, saturated fat, trans fat, sugar and salt.
- Avoid eating too much food or too much of one type of food.
- Space your meals evenly throughout the day.
- Don't skip meals.



## 2. Be active.

Regular exercise may help lower your blood sugar. In fact, you might even be able to use less diabetes medicine if you stay active.\* Plus, exercise may help lower your risk of heart disease and stroke, help increase your energy and help ease stress.

Most adults should aim for at least 2.5 hours of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise a week. Add strength exercises on 2 or more days a week.

If you've been inactive, start slowly. You might begin by exercising in 10-minute sessions — and gradually build from there. Walking is a great exercise for beginners.

\*Talk with your doctor before significantly increasing your activity level or changing your medication dosage.

Sources: American Diabetes Association; National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases; Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion



## 3. Take your medicine.

If you have type 1 diabetes, you'll need to take insulin every day. There are different kinds of insulin — and different ways of taking it — so talk with your doctor about what's right for you.

If you have type 2 diabetes, you may be able to manage it with diet and exercise alone. If not, your doctor may prescribe diabetes pills or insulin to help keep your blood sugar in a healthy range.

Work closely with your doctor to take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Learn how and when to take them — and speak up if you have questions.



# It takes a team.

To live well with diabetes, you'll need a game plan. And there are many health professionals who may be able to help you.\* Here's a closer look at the type of care each provides:

**Your primary care provider (PCP).**\*\* Your PCP may coordinate your care — and help connect you with other experts when needed.

**An endocrinologist.** This is a doctor who specializes in treating hormone conditions like diabetes. This person may be particularly helpful if you have type 1 diabetes or if you're experiencing complications from diabetes.

**A diabetes educator.** This expert may help you learn skills to manage your condition at home.

**An eye care professional and a dentist.** Diabetes raises the risk of vision problems and gum disease. So you'll need regular checkups.

**A registered dietitian.** This nutrition expert may help teach you how to prepare meals that are good for you — and good to eat. You'll learn how to follow a meal plan and how food affects your blood sugar.

**A podiatrist.** You may see a foot doctor to help prevent infections of the feet and lower legs.

**An exercise specialist.** If developing a fitness routine is part of your treatment plan, your doctor may suggest you work with an expert.

**A mental health counselor.** Living with a chronic condition may be challenging. If you're having trouble coping, ask your doctor for a referral.

## Gather your support crew.

Of course, your family and friends may be a vital part of your team too. So tell them how to help you. They might need to know what you can and can't eat, for example.

You may also be interested in:

**A support group.** You might meet other people living with diabetes — and share tips. Your doctor or diabetes educator may be able to recommend a group.

**Diabetes classes.** Local hospitals and clinics may offer programs in your area. Or you might take an online course.



## Need an assist?

There's another place you might turn for help — and it may surprise you. It's your workplace. Some companies offer programs to help employees and their families manage diabetes, lose weight if needed and improve their health. Ask human resources what help is available to you. Some services may be covered by your health plan — so be sure to check your benefits too.

\* Check your benefit plan to see what services may be covered.

\*\* Depending on your benefit plan, selection of a primary care physician may be required. Be sure to check your plan for specific coverage details.

Sources: American Diabetes Association; National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

# 10 questions for your doctor.

Here are a few sample questions you might ask your doctor about managing your condition. Add your own — and take this list with you to your next doctor visit.



1. What type of diabetes do I have?

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2. How often should I check my blood sugar? And what should my levels be?

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3. How often should I have an **A1C test**?

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4. Do I need to test my urine for ketones?

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5. Do I need to take insulin or other medications? If so, how do I use them?

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6. Do I need to follow a special meal or exercise plan?

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7. When should I have tests to check for kidney problems?

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8. What should my blood pressure, cholesterol and weight goals be?

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9. How often should I have my feet checked by a doctor? See a dentist? Have a dilated eye exam?

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10. What resources are available to help me learn more?

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Add your own questions or notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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Sources: American Diabetes Association; National Institutes of Health

# Testing, testing, ABC.

Learning your ABCs takes on new meaning when you have diabetes.

As part of your regular checkups, your doctor may want to track 3 important numbers that say a lot about your health:

**A is for A1C.** The A1C test measures your average blood sugar level over the past 2 or 3 months. Along with your daily blood sugar results, this test helps you know how well you're managing your condition.

**B is for blood pressure.** If your blood pressure is too high, it might raise your risk for a heart attack, a stroke or kidney disease.

**C is for cholesterol.** Diabetes and high cholesterol often go hand in hand. If certain kinds of fat build up in your blood, that may lead to heart disease.

Talk with your doctor about the right ABC goals for you — and how often you need to be tested. The worksheet on the next page may help you keep track of your goals.

Sources: American Diabetes Association; National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

## What about eAG?

A1C is usually reported as a percentage. But sometimes your test results may show a different number called estimated average glucose (eAG). Instead of a percentage, eAG is measured in milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL) of blood — just like your daily blood sugar tests. That may make it easier for you to compare the results.

Source: American Diabetes Association





## My ABC goals.

Take this worksheet with you to your next doctor visit. Ask what your goals should be — and how often you need to be tested.

### A1C

How often to be tested: \_\_\_\_\_ My goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

Result:

### Blood pressure

How often to be tested: \_\_\_\_\_ My goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

Result:

### Cholesterol

How often to be tested: \_\_\_\_\_ My goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

Result:



# My daily blood sugar record.

Checking your blood sugar levels every day may help you know if your diabetes care plan is working.

Use this worksheet to help track your blood sugar levels. Talk with your doctor about what your goals should be, how often to test, and what to do if your levels are too low or too high. Then be sure to take your records with you to your doctor visits.

My targets:

**Before meals:** \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ mg/dL

**2 hours after starting a meal:** below \_\_\_\_\_ mg/dL

Dates:

\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	Time   mg/dL	Time   mg/dL	Time   mg/dL	Time   mg/dL	Time   mg/dL	Time   mg/dL	Time   mg/dL
<b>Before breakfast</b>							
<b>After breakfast</b>							
<b>Medicine</b>							
<b>Before lunch</b>							
<b>After lunch</b>							
<b>Medicine</b>							
<b>Before dinner</b>							
<b>After dinner</b>							
<b>Medicine</b>							
<b>Other</b>							
<b>Medicine</b>							
<b>Notes</b>							

Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians; American Diabetes Association



## My medicine record.

This list may help you, your doctor and your pharmacist keep track of every medicine you take. Be sure to include prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, supplements and herbal products.

Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

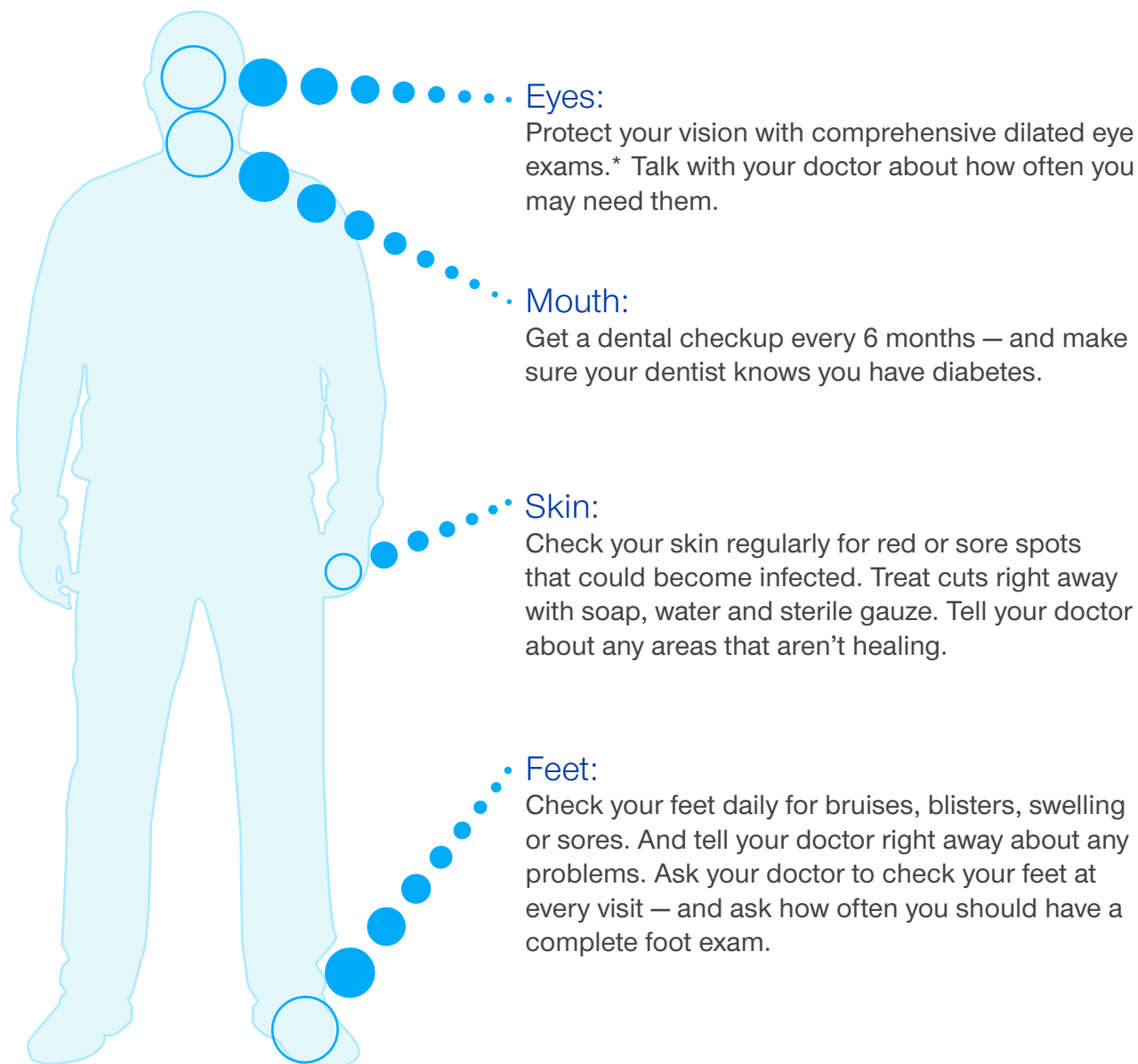
What I take: Name and active ingredients	Why I take it	How much I take	When and how I take it	What it looks like	Who prescribed it	Start/stop dates

Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration

# Stay well head-to-toe.

Diabetes may take a toll on different parts of your body. But finding problems early — and getting treatment — may help protect your health.

Talk with your doctor about the screenings and self-care that you may need.



\*This may be a covered benefit when you use a network doctor. A dilated eye exam may fall under your medical benefits or any vision benefits you have. You may be responsible for deductibles, copays or coinsurance that apply.

Sources: American Diabetes Association; National Institutes of Health



## 5 gentle skin care tips.

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People with diabetes may be prone to dry, itchy skin. That's partly because when blood sugar is high, the body loses fluid. If your skin cracks, that may lead to a dangerous infection.

That's why you want to do all you can to care for your skin. Of course, it's important to manage your blood sugar. But these daily habits may help head off problems too.

- 1. Watch it at the faucet.** Hot water may leave skin parched. Take only warm showers and baths — and don't linger too long.
- 2. Stay on the mild side.** Wash with gentle soaps and shampoos. And skip bubble baths.
- 3. Moisturize well.** After bathing, slather on a moisturizer. But don't put lotion between your toes — too much trapped moisture there might allow fungus to grow. Ask your doctor what skin-care items may be right for you.
- 4. Stay hydrated.** This may help keep your skin moist. When the air in your home is dry, using a humidifier may help as well.
- 5. Nourish your skin.** Make sure your diet includes foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, tofu, walnuts and flaxseed.

Sources: American Academy of Dermatology; American Diabetes Association; Joslin Diabetes Center





## 10 tasty foods to try in your diabetes meal plan.

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*OK, but what can I eat?* That might be one of the first questions on your mind when you learn you have diabetes. And the answer is *plenty!*

There are many diabetes-friendly foods that are rich in vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, fiber — and flavor! Try some of these in your eating plan:

- 1. Beans.** They're super sources of protein — without the saturated fat you'll find in meat.
- 2. Dark green, leafy vegetables.** Try spinach, collards or kale — and other low-calorie, low-carb greens.
- 3. Sweet potatoes.** Swap regular spuds for these. They're packed with vitamins and fiber.
- 4. Berries.** Besides being juicy and sweet, they're high in antioxidants and fiber.
- 5. Tomatoes.** Any way you slice them, tomatoes provide plenty of potassium and vitamins C and E.
- 6. Fish.** Choose varieties high in heart-friendly omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, sardines and herring.
- 7. Whole grains.** Opt for fiber-rich whole grains, such as rolled oats, quinoa and barley.
- 8. Nuts.** These are a good source of healthy fats. A small serving may help you feel full.
- 9. Milk and yogurt.** Calcium-rich foods may help strengthen bones and teeth. Look for options lower in fat and added sugar.
- 10. Citrus fruits.** Choose your favorites — oranges, grapefruits, lemons, limes — for fiber and good-for-you vitamin C.

Source: American Diabetes Association

# Dining out with diabetes.

There's no magic formula for dining out with diabetes. But these steps may help you manage your condition — and enjoy yourself too.

## **Know your plan.**

Your meal plan helps you know what kinds of food to eat — as well as when and how much. Try to rely on it whether you're at home or in a restaurant.

## **Pack a snack.**

When dining out, it's not always possible to eat at your regular mealtime. To help avoid a blood sugar dip, bring a snack, such as whole-wheat crackers or an apple, in case there's an unexpected wait.

## **Choose heart-healthy items.**

People with diabetes may have a higher-than-average risk of heart disease, so look for healthy, low-sodium foods on the menu. Lean meats, veggies and whole grains may be good choices.

## **Downsize portions.**

If you eat more carbohydrates than usual, your glucose levels may go higher than they should. To keep portions in check, share an entrée with a friend. Or ask for half to be boxed up as soon as your meal arrives.

## **Plan ahead for desserts.**

If you're having a treat, you may want to eat fewer carbs in your main course.

Sources: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; American Diabetes Association; American Heart Association; Joslin Diabetes Center





## Have a sick-day plan.

When you have diabetes, common illnesses may do more than make you feel lousy. They might make your blood sugar levels harder to manage. You can't predict when you'll get hit with a cold, flu or stomach bug. But you may feel safer if you have a plan ready. Talk with your doctor about:



**How often to check blood sugar.** When you're sick, your body releases hormones to fight the illness. This may raise your blood sugar levels. So you might need to check them more often than usual.



**How to take your medicines.** You may need to take a different dose than usual when you're sick. Or your doctor may have you switch from pills to insulin. Some over-the-counter medicines may affect blood sugar too.



**What to eat.** You should try to follow your food plan. If that's not possible, choose foods that are easy on the stomach, such as crackers, broth or applesauce. And be sure to drink plenty of fluids.



**When to call your doctor.** Make sure you know how to reach your health care team during off hours. You may need to call if:

- You're not better after a couple of days.
- You vomit more than once or have diarrhea for more than 6 hours.
- You have trouble breathing.
- Your blood sugar or ketone levels stay too high.
- You get dehydrated.
- You have a high fever.

Sources: American Diabetes Association; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Institutes of Health



## Be ready for an emergency.

Having an emergency plan in place before a disaster strikes is a smart move for anyone. When you have diabetes, being prepared makes even more sense. Get started with these tips:



**Stock up on diabetes supplies.** Try to store at least a week's worth of medicines and supplies. Use a grab-and-go container, in case you need to evacuate. You might include extra test strips and batteries for your glucose meter — as well as something to treat low blood sugar. If you need to bring insulin, refreezable ice packs may help keep it cool. And if you use a home dialysis machine, consider buying a small backup generator to help see you through power outages.



**List your emergency contacts.** Keep the phone numbers of your doctors and treatment centers handy, as well as a backup in case they have to close.



**Keep plenty of food and water on hand.** High blood sugar raises the risk of dehydration. So a 3-day supply of clean water is a must. You'll also need food for at least a few days. Good nonperishable options include peanut butter and crackers and healthy energy bars.



**Identify yourself.** If you are in a disaster, it's important to let emergency and relief workers know right away that you have diabetes. Always wear a medical ID bracelet or necklace. And consider registering with your water and power companies so that they make your home a priority when restoring services.

Sources: American College of Endocrinology; American Diabetes Association; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Ready.gov



# Tips for travelers.

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Diabetes requires daily care. But that doesn't have to stop you from traveling. Before you leave home, here are some important ways to prepare:



**Check in for a checkup.** See your doctor about 6 to 8 weeks before your trip. Be sure to ask for:

- A letter that lists your medications, supplies and allergies.
- Prescriptions for extra medication. You may need to fill them in case of an emergency.
- Immunizations — depending on where you're going.



**Pack wisely.** Keep these essentials with you at all times:

- Diabetes medicines and supplies. Bring twice as much as you need — in case you're delayed.
- A medical ID with emergency health information.
- Extra batteries for your glucose meter.
- Snacks, such as crackers, peanut butter and fruit.
- Your doctor's contact information.
- Your health plan ID card.\*



**Prepare for takeoff.** If you'll be flying to another time zone, ask your doctor how to adjust the timing of your medicine.

To help avoid screening delays:

- Arrive at the airport early.
- Keep medications in their original packaging — then put them in a clear plastic bag.
- Let airport security know you're carrying diabetes supplies.
- Tell your flight attendant or someone you're traveling with that you have diabetes.

\*Check your benefit plan to see what services may be covered while traveling.

Sources: American Association of Diabetes Educators; American Diabetes Association; National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

# More resources for you.

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Read more.

**Diabetes and your mouth.** ▶

**Diabetes and your vision.** ▶

**Diabetes medications.** ▶

**Pregnancy and diabetes.** ▶



The information provided is for general informational purposes only and is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for professional health care. You should consult an appropriate health care professional for your specific needs and to determine whether making a lifestyle change or decision based on this information is appropriate for you. Some treatments mentioned may not be covered by your health plan. Please refer to your benefit plan documents for information about specific benefit coverage and limitations or call the toll-free member phone number on your health plan ID card.



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