



Health Matters

Diabetes Management: It Takes a Team



DIABETES MANAGEMENT IT TAKES A TEAM



Working with a team of health care professionals can help you get the diabetes care you need to improve your health.

(NAPS)—Almost every American has a family member or friend affected by diabetes, and more than 1 in 10 Americans have the disease. Diabetes occurs when your blood glucose, also called blood sugar, is too high. Diabetes can damage many of your organs, including your eyes, kidneys, nerves and heart, and is linked to some types of cancer.

If you have diabetes, working with a team of health care professionals can offer you the personal care you need to improve your health. Your team may include your primary care provider, a nurse, an eye doctor, a certified diabetes educator, a pharmacist and others. Your team can give you advice, recommend a program to manage your diabetes and answer any questions you may have.

“Working with a team helps ensure people stay on top of their self-care plan, including having their blood pressure, feet and weight checked regularly,” said National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) Director Dr. Griffin P. Rodgers. “Routine health care will help people find and treat health problems early, or help prevent them altogether.”

But remember, you are the most important participant in your diabetes care. Here are some tips to help you manage your diabetes.

- Become an expert on your disease, and don't be afraid to ask for help.
- Talk with your primary care provider and other members of your health care team about ways to manage your diabetes as early as possible. Your health care team can also help you develop a plan to prevent diabetes-related health problems.
- Get routine medical exams to check your blood glucose, cholesterol, blood pressure and weight. Keep a list of your numbers so you can see how they are changing.

- Have routine eye, foot and dental checks, because you may not have any symptoms until you develop serious health problems.
- If you smoke or use other tobacco products, stop.
- Ask your primary care provider what vaccines you should get to reduce your risk of getting sick, such as a flu shot, pneumonia shot or COVID-19 vaccines.

Healthy habits can also help manage your diabetes. Set a goal to be physically active on most days of the week. A daily walk with a friend or a family member is one way to be physically active. If you are not active now, ask your health care team about the types and amounts of physical activity that meet your needs.

Following a diabetes meal plan can help manage your blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol. Choose foods that are lower in calories, saturated fat, trans fat, sugar and salt, such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, tofu, beans, seeds and nonfat or low-fat milk and cheese. Your primary care provider may refer you to a registered dietitian to help you create a meal plan that is easy for you to follow and has the nutrients to help manage your diabetes.

Stress can lead to unhealthy habits such as smoking, poor sleep and excessive eating. Take part in a diabetes education program or support group that teaches you techniques for managing stress. You can also ask for help if you feel down or overwhelmed. Talking with a mental health counselor, friend or family member about your feelings may help you feel better.

Working with your diabetes health care team makes it possible to get the care you need to live a healthy and fulfilled life.

To learn more about how to manage diabetes, visit the NIDDK website at www.niddk.nih.gov.