

# Do you have diabetes?

If you've recently been diagnosed – or have been aware of your condition for several years – there are many things you should know. The most important thing to remember is that diabetes is a serious disease, but it can be controlled. Even if you have other health problems, it's possible to have an active lifestyle.

## Here are some tips to help you:

### Accept your medical conditions.

Read brochures, use the Internet and visit the library to learn everything you can about diabetes and any other illnesses you have. Plan to make changes in your lifestyle to help yourself feel better.

### Monitor your blood sugar.

Even if you feel fine, high blood sugar can cause serious problems. So test your blood glucose level with a glucose monitor. Medicare Part B now covers glucose monitors, test strips and lancets – even if your diabetes is not treated with insulin injections.

### Control your diabetes.

With assistance from your diabetes care team – including your physician, eye doctor, dietitian and perhaps other specialists – you will be able to control your condition.

### Design a meal plan.

Work with your physician or a dietitian to make a meal plan that includes foods you enjoy. A meal plan is a guide telling you how much and what kinds of food you can choose at meals and snack times. The right meal plan will also help keep your weight within proper guidelines.

### Take a walk!

Or do any other exercise you enjoy. Exercise lowers blood glucose levels because it takes some glucose out of your blood to use for energy during and after exercise.

### Understand your medication.

There are two kinds of medicines that lower blood glucose levels: insulin shots and oral medications (pills). Diabetes pills are not insulin but may help keep your blood glucose level within a normal range. If necessary, your physician will provide an insulin therapy routine designed to control your blood glucose and help you feel better.

### Ask for assistance.

Many patients with diabetes need help to monitor their condition. Ask your doctor for assistance. It's also a good idea to join a support group. Call your local American Diabetes Association to locate a group of others who have diabetes.

### Watch for long-term health problems.

Complications of diabetes can lead to eye and kidney disease, heart attack, foot infections and stroke. You should avoid smoking. Once every year, you should have a dilated eye exam performed by an ophthalmologist. Also, you should check your feet daily for cuts, bruises, blisters, redness or swelling. Never walk barefoot – always wear socks and shoes that fit well.

It's also important to remember that your diabetes control won't always be perfect. Stay with your diet, exercise and medication plan and your blood sugar level will soon be under control again.



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