

Diabetes: *First steps after diagnosis*

What is diabetes?

Diabetes [dy-uh-BEET-es] is a disease that makes it hard for your body make or use a hormone called insulin. Without insulin, your body cannot use the energy (**glucose** [GLOO-kos], or sugar) in the foods you eat. This causes a buildup of glucose in the bloodstream, which makes you sick. For most people, diabetes is a lifelong condition.

How is diabetes treated?

Diabetes is treated with 3 basic strategies: monitoring (checking) your blood glucose, diet and exercise changes, and taking medications.

Monitoring blood glucose

Monitoring your blood glucose on a regular basis is the only way you can know if your treatment plan is working. Monitoring is done in 2 ways:

- **Blood glucose self-test.** This test measures how much glucose you have in your blood at any given time. You will test yourself 1 or more times a day using your blood glucose meter.
- **HbA1c (or “A1c”) test.** This test measures your blood glucose control over a 3-month period. You will likely need to visit your doctor to have this test. Your HbA1c should be checked at least twice a year.

Taking medication

Your doctor will likely prescribe medication to help control your blood glucose. This may include **oral medications** (pills), **insulin or other injections** (shots), or a combination. You may also need to take medications to help with other health conditions, such as high cholesterol or high blood pressure.



What do I need to do next?

- 1 **Schedule a follow-up appointment with your doctor or diabetes educator.** Regular visits can help you stay on track with your diabetes plan—especially as you get started.
- 2 **Learn more—and follow up.** Learn more about your health condition from diabetes books, a librarian, classes, or other trusted sources, such as the American Diabetes Association or Intermountain Healthcare.
- 3 **Track your habits.** You can help your care team by writing down important information about yourself, such as your medications, exercise, and eating habits on [page 3](#). Bring this information to your next visit with a diabetes educator or doctor.
- 4 **Take care of yourself.** Reach out for emotional support. Stay socially active. Seek out people who will listen. Consider contacting a professional counselor.

Following a meal plan and getting regular exercise

Diet and exercise changes can help your body control blood glucose naturally. A meal plan is a guideline to help you develop healthier eating habits. It can easily be adjusted to match your lifestyle.

Pairing a meal plan with regular exercise can also help you lower your cholesterol, control your blood pressure, reach or keep a healthy weight, and increase strength and flexibility.

Accepting your diagnosis

People react to a diabetes diagnosis in different ways. It's important to know that diabetes is a common diagnosis and that people can live healthy, full lives after their diagnosis. Here are some tips to help you cope with the emotions you may feel in the next few days and weeks:

- **Give yourself time to adjust.** Pay attention to your feelings and take care of yourself in the way that's best for you.
- **Talk honestly about your feelings.** Rather than keeping feelings inside, be open to sharing them. This can decrease your fears and clear up any misunderstandings about living well with diabetes.
- **Learn to relax.** Find ways to relax your body and take your mind off your worries. Some examples could include sports or hobbies, meditation, acupuncture, prayer, or yoga. Simple deep breathing exercises can also help.
- **Most of all, try not to get discouraged.** With time and a little help, you can move through your grief and lead a happy and contented life.



All adults should get at least 30 minutes of exercise 4 to 5 days each week. You may need more if you are managing a health condition such as diabetes.

What is a diabetes educator?

A diabetes educator is a specially trained nurse, dietitian, or other healthcare provider who can teach you the skills you need to succeed with diabetes self-management.

Ask your doctor for a referral, or go to [intermountainhealthcare.org](https://www.intermountainhealthcare.org) and choose "How Can We Help" and search for "Diabetes."

For friends and family

Learning that your loved one has diabetes can be upsetting for you, too. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- **Diabetes isn't a tragedy.** It is a serious problem, but it's a manageable one. You won't help anyone by focusing on the negative.
- **Your loved one needs time to adjust.** Give them the time, room, and support they need to make it through these first days after their diagnosis. Listen to them without making judgments or offering advice.
- **You'll need to learn and change, too.** Diabetes will change your family life in large and small ways. You can get through these changes a lot easier, and help your loved one more, if you take the time to learn about diabetes and support their lifestyle changes. For example, you may be able to help by shifting family schedules, joining in on daily exercise, or helping to make healthier meals for the entire family.

You might also need support. You may feel some of the same things your loved one does right now. Talk to someone outside your family about these feelings to help keep emotions stable at home.

Personal information

Diabetes educator (if assigned) _____

Doctor _____

Date _____

Medication

Medication allergies, if any _____

List your usual medication routine (include all prescriptions, non-prescription medicines, inhalers, patches, vitamins, herbs).

Medication	Dose / amount	Time (AM / PM)

Add additional sheets if necessary.

Exercise and physical activity log

Do you usually exercise? Yes No If yes, use the table below to track your activity for a few days (or until you next see a doctor). Follow your *typical* exercise routine—don't increase or decrease your usual amount of activity.

Date	Type of Exercise	Time of Day	How Long	Symptoms, Problems, Comments?

Food and nutrition log

Starting today, and continuing until you see your doctor about your diabetes, write down everything you eat every day. Don't try to eat "perfectly." Just follow a normal, healthy diet. Keeping a log of everything you eat helps your medical team understand where you need support and resources.

	BREAKFAST	SNACK	LUNCH	SNACK	DINNER	SNACK
DAY 1	time: _____					
date						
DAY 2	time: _____					
date						
DAY 3	time: _____					
date						
DAY 4	time: _____					
date						
DAY 5	time: _____					
date						



Questions for my doctor or diabetes educator

Intermountain Healthcare complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. Se proveen servicios de interpretación gratis. Hable con un empleado para solicitarlo. 我們將根據您的需求提供免費的口譯服務。請找尋工作人員協助。

© 2004-2018 Intermountain Healthcare. All rights reserved. The content presented here is for your information only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, and it should not be used to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease. Please consult your healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns. More health information is available at intermountainhealthcare.org. Patient and Provider Publications FS265 - 07/18 (Last reviewed - 07/18) Also available in Spanish.