

Type 1 Diabetes: Care Instructions



Your Care Instructions

Type 1 diabetes is a lifelong disease that develops when the pancreas stops making insulin. The body needs insulin to let sugar (glucose) move from the blood into the body's cells, where it can be used for energy or stored for later use.

Without insulin, the sugar cannot get into the cells to do its work. It stays in the blood instead. This can cause high blood sugar levels. A person has diabetes when the blood sugar is too high. Over time, diabetes can lead to diseases of the heart, blood vessels, nerves, kidneys, and eyes.

To treat type 1 diabetes, you need insulin. You can give yourself insulin through an insulin pump, an insulin pen, or a syringe (needle). Insulin, exercise, and a healthy diet can help prevent or delay problems from diabetes.

With education and support, you will treat diabetes as a part of your life—not your whole life. Seek support when you need it from your family, friends, and your doctor or other diabetes experts.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Take your insulin on time and in the right dose. This helps keep your blood sugar steady. Do not stop or change your insulin without talking to your doctor first.
- Check and record your blood sugar as often as directed. These records can help your doctor see how you are doing and adjust your treatment if needed. It is important to keep track of any symptoms you have, such as low blood sugar, and any changes in your activities, diet, or insulin use.
- Carbohydrate—the body's main source of fuel—affects blood sugar more than any other nutrient. Carbohydrate is in fruits, vegetables, milk, and yogurt. It also is in breads, cereals, vegetables such as potatoes and corn, and sugary foods such as candy and cakes. Follow your meal plan to know how much carbohydrate to eat at each meal and snack.
- Aim for 30 minutes of exercise on most, preferably all, days of the week. Walking is a good choice. You also may want to do other activities, such as running, swimming, cycling, or playing tennis or team sports. Try to do muscle-strengthening exercises at least 2 times a week.

- Control your cholesterol and blood pressure. Exercise and healthy eating can help with these goals. If you have medicine for cholesterol or high blood pressure, take it as directed. Do not stop or change a medicine without talking to your doctor first.
- If you have discussed it with your doctor, take a low-dose aspirin every day to help prevent heart attack and stroke. Do not start taking aspirin unless your doctor knows about it.
- Do not smoke. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.
- Check your feet daily for blisters, cracks, and sores. Have your doctor look at your feet whenever you have a checkup.
- Get a checkup every 3 to 6 months. Your doctor will tell you how often to come in. You will need regular tests such as:
 - A hemoglobin A1c test. You may need this test more often than once a year. It is a good measure of how well your treatment is working.
 - A cholesterol test.
 - A urine test for protein. This checks for kidney problems.
 - A complete foot exam.
 - An eye exam, even if you do not think your vision has changed.

When should you call for help?

Call anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You passed out (lost consciousness), or you suddenly become very sleepy or confused. (You may have very low blood sugar.)
- You have symptoms of high blood sugar, such as:
 - Blurred vision.
 - Trouble staying awake or being woken up.
 - Fast, deep breathing.
 - Breath that smells fruity.
 - Belly pain, not feeling hungry, and vomiting.
 - Feeling confused.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- Your blood sugar stays higher than the level your doctor has set for you.
- You have symptoms of low blood sugar, such as:
 - Sweating.
 - Feeling nervous, shaky, and weak.
 - Extreme hunger and slight nausea.
 - Dizziness and headache.
 - Blurred vision.
 - Confusion.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You often have problems controlling your blood sugar.
- You have symptoms of long-term diabetes problems, such as:
 - New vision changes.
 - New pain, numbness, or tingling in your hands or feet.
 - Skin problems.