

Type 2 Diabetes: Care Instructions



Your Care Instructions

Type 2 diabetes is a disease that develops when the body's tissues cannot use insulin properly. Over time, the pancreas cannot make enough insulin. Insulin is a hormone that helps the body's cells use sugar (glucose) for energy. It also helps the body store extra sugar in muscle, fat, and liver cells.

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 stays too high too much of the time. Over time, diabetes can lead to diseases of the heart, blood vessels, nerves, kidneys, and eyes.

You may be able to control your blood sugar by losing weight, eating a healthy diet, and getting daily exercise. You may also have to take insulin or other diabetes medicine.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments. 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?

- Keep your blood sugar at a target level (which you set with your doctor).
 - 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.
 - Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine. You will get more details on the specific medicines your doctor prescribes.
- Check your blood sugar as often as your doctor recommends. It is important to keep track of any symptoms you have, such as low blood sugar. Also tell your doctor if you have any changes in your activities, diet, or insulin use.
- Talk to your doctor before you start taking aspirin every day. Aspirin can help certain people

lower their risk of a heart attack or stroke. But taking aspirin isn't right for everyone, because it can cause serious bleeding.

- 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.
- Keep your cholesterol and blood pressure at normal levels. You may need to take one or more medicines to reach your goals. Take them exactly as directed. Do not stop or change a medicine without talking to your doctor first.

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.)

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- Your blood sugar is 300 mg/dL or is 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.

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