

## Take Care of Your Diabetes Each Day

Do four things each day to help your blood glucose levels stay in your target range:

- Follow your healthy eating plan.
- Be physically active.
- Take your medicines as prescribed.
- Monitor your diabetes.

These things may seem like a lot to do at first. Just make small changes until these steps become a normal part of your day.

### Follow Your Healthy Eating Plan

Ask your doctor to give you the name of someone trained to help you create a healthy eating plan, such as a dietitian. This plan, often called medical nutrition therapy, will include regular monitoring by your dietitian and education about how to adjust your eating habits as the need occurs. Medical nutrition therapy is usually covered by insurance or Medicare as long as your doctor refers you. Your dietitian can help you plan meals that include foods that you and your family like and that are good for you.

Your healthy eating plan will include

- breads, cereals, rice, and whole grains
- fruits and vegetables
- meat and meat substitutes
- dairy products
- healthy fats

Your plan will also help you learn how to eat the right amount, or portions, of food. Making good food choices will

- help you reach and stay at a healthy weight
- keep your blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels under control
- prevent heart and blood vessel disease

If you take insulin, look at the white boxes like this one for “Action Steps.”

<b>Action Steps If You Take Insulin</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Follow your healthy eating plan.</li><li>• Don't skip meals, especially if you've already taken your insulin, because your blood glucose levels may drop too low.</li><li>• Learn more about how to handle low blood glucose, also called <b>hypoglycemia</b>, in the section “Learn about High and Low Blood Glucose Levels.”</li></ul>

If you don't take insulin, look at the blue boxes like this one for "Action Steps."

<b>Action Steps If You Don't Take Insulin</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Follow your healthy eating plan.</li><li>• Don't skip meals, especially if you take diabetes medicines, because your blood glucose levels may drop too low.</li><li>• Read more about how to handle low blood glucose, also called <b>hypoglycemia</b>, in the section "Learn about High and Low Blood Glucose Levels."</li><li>• Eat several small meals during the day instead of big meals.</li></ul>

Read more about healthy eating plans in *What I need to know about Eating and Diabetes* at [www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov).

## **Be Physically Active**

Physical activity helps you stay healthy. Physical activity is especially good if you have diabetes because it

- helps you reach or stay at a healthy weight
- helps insulin work better to lower your blood glucose levels
- is good for your heart and lungs
- gives you more energy

Even small amounts of physical activity help manage diabetes, such as when you are physically active at work or home. People with diabetes should aim for 30 to 60 minutes of activity most days of the week. Children and adolescents with type 2 diabetes who are 10 to 17 years old should aim for 60 minutes of activity every day. Not all physical activity has to take place at the same time.

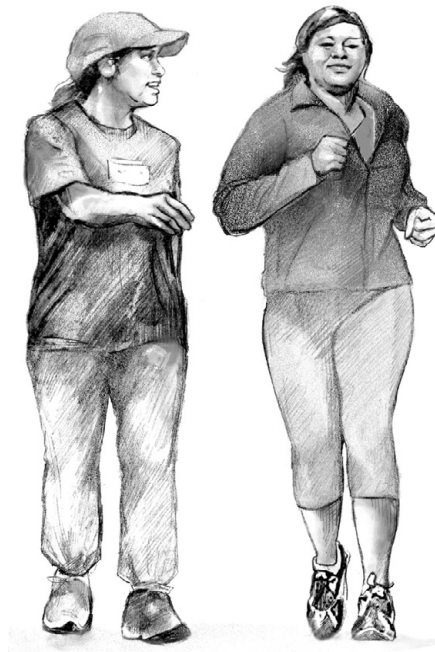
Increase daily activity by decreasing time spent watching TV or at the computer. Children and adolescents should limit screen time not related to school to less than 2 hours a day. Limiting screen time can help you meet your physical activity goal.

People with diabetes should

- always talk with a doctor before starting a new physical activity program.
- do **aerobic** activities, such as brisk walking, which use the body's large muscles to make the heart beat faster. The large muscles are those of the upper and lower arms and legs and those that control head, shoulder, and hip movements.
- do activities to strengthen muscles and bone, such as sit-ups or lifting weights. Aim for two times a week.
- stretch to increase flexibility, lower stress, and help prevent muscle soreness after physical activity.

Many activities can help your child and your family stay active and have fun. Consider activities that they might enjoy and can stick with, such as

- playing basketball
- dancing to music with friends
- taking a walk or a bike ride



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Physical activity helps you stay healthy.

**Action Steps  
If You Take Insulin**

- See your doctor before becoming physically active.
- Check your blood glucose levels before, during, and after physical activity. Don't start a physical activity program when your blood glucose levels are high or if you have **ketones** in your blood or urine. Read more about ketones in the section "Monitor Your Diabetes."
- Don't be physically active right before you go to bed because it could cause low blood glucose while you sleep.

**Action Steps  
If You Don't Take Insulin**

- See your doctor before becoming physically active.
- Ask your doctor about whether you need to eat before you are physically active.

When you are being physically active, carry glucose tablets or a **carbohydrate**-rich snack or drink with you, such as fruit or juice, in case your blood glucose levels go too low.

Read more about increasing your physical activity in *What I need to know about Physical Activity and Diabetes* at [www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov).

## Take Your Medicines as Prescribed

If you have type 2 diabetes and are unable to reach your target blood glucose levels with a healthy eating plan and physical activity, diabetes medicines may help. Your doctor may prescribe you diabetes medicines that work best for you and your lifestyle.

If you have type 1 diabetes, you need insulin shots if your body has stopped making insulin or if it doesn't make enough. Some people with type 2 diabetes or gestational diabetes also need to take insulin shots.



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## **Diabetes Medicines**

Most people with type 2 diabetes use medicines other than insulin shots. People with type 2 diabetes use medicine to help their blood glucose levels stay in their target range. If your body makes insulin and the insulin doesn't lower your blood glucose levels enough, you may need to take one or more medicines.

Diabetes medicines come in pill and shot form. Some people take diabetes medicines once a day and other medicines more often. Ask your health care team when you should take your diabetes medicines. Sometimes, people who take diabetes medicines may also need insulin shots for a while.

Be sure to tell your doctor if your medicines make you feel sick or if you have any other problems. If you get sick or have surgery, your diabetes medicines may no longer work to lower your blood glucose levels. Always check with your doctor before you stop taking your diabetes medicines.



## **Insulin Shots**

Only a doctor can prescribe insulin. Your doctor can tell you how much insulin you should take and which of the following ways to take insulin is best for you:

- **Insulin shot.** You'll use a needle attached to a **syringe**—a hollow tube with a plunger—that you fill with a dose of insulin. Some people use an insulin pen, a penlike device with a needle and a cartridge of insulin. Never share insulin needles or insulin pens, even with family.
- **Insulin pump.** An insulin pump is a small device filled with insulin that you wear on your belt or keep in your pocket. The pump connects to a small, plastic tube and a small needle. You or your doctor inserts the needle under your skin. The needle can stay in for several days.
- **Insulin jet injector.** This device sends a fine spray of insulin through your skin with high-pressure air instead of a needle.

- **Insulin injection port.** You or your doctor inserts a small tube just beneath your skin, where it remains in place for several days. You can inject insulin into the end of the tube instead of through your skin.

Read more about ways to take insulin in *Alternative Devices for Taking Insulin* at [www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov).



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Only a doctor can prescribe insulin. Your doctor can tell you how much insulin you should take.

## **Other Medicines**

Your doctor may prescribe other medicines to help with problems related to diabetes, such as

- aspirin for heart health
- cholesterol-lowering medicines
- medicines for high blood pressure

Remembering to take your medicines at the correct times each day can be challenging. Many people find that keeping a weekly pill box with separate boxes for each day, and even separate boxes for morning and evening, can help. Also ask your health care team to update your list of medicines at each visit so you always have an accurate list of what medicines to take and when.

Read more about diabetes and medicines in *What I need to know about Diabetes Medicines* at [www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov).