

DIABETES: TRIP OF A LIFETIME

Just diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes? If the answer is “yes,” you’re probably positioning yourself for a new lifestyle.



Starting the Journey

How did you find out that you’re diabetic? Maybe your doctor ordered a fasting blood glucose test or a Glucose Tolerance Test (GTT). Either would involve a blood draw or blood draws to measure the level of sugar (glucose), after you didn’t eat or drink for at least 8 hours. For the GTT, you would have been given a sweet liquid to drink and had your blood drawn several times.

Or you may have had a hemoglobin A1C test. This reflects your average blood sugar over the last 3 months. It measures the amount of glucose attached to the hemoglobin part of your blood. Your doctor may order it several times a year to see if you’re meeting your treatment goals.

According to the American Diabetes Association (ADA), an A1C level of 6.5% or higher is in the diabetes range. Your doctor might interpret your A1C as an “estimated average glucose” (eAG), which is similar to a blood sugar number. For example, if your A1C is 7, your eAG would be 154.



Hazard: High Blood Sugar!

Why is higher-than-normal blood sugar bad for you? It’s because high blood sugar can damage the very small blood vessels throughout your body. This damage can make you more likely to develop vision problems, heart disease, high blood pressure, nerve problems affecting your hands and feet, and kidney disease.

A Map to Wellness

The good news is, getting control of your blood sugar can help prevent these problems before they cause symptoms. Besides taking the diabetic medication your primary care provider (PCP) prescribes, dieting and exercising are huge in getting your diabetes under control.



Road Food

What can you eat to stay on track with blood sugar control? There are some general rules to help you plan meals and shop in sync with your new diagnosis. Ask your PCP if you can talk to a dietitian who can guide your new eating plan. Also, Disease Case Managers at your insurance Plan can answer your questions and send you information to help you on your journey. Just call the Member Services number on the back of your insurance card and ask to speak with a Disease Case Manager for diabetes.

According to the Mayo Clinic, a diabetic diet is based on eating the most healthful foods in moderate amounts, and keeping regular mealtimes. You can still eat carbs, which can include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes (beans and peas) and low-fat dairy products. Many of these foods are also high in fiber, which helps control blood sugar levels. Non-fried protein foods such as fish and chicken should be part of your diet, plus foods which contain “good” fats, like avocados, nuts and canola or olive oil.



The American Diabetes Association has come up with an easy way to eat right to help control diabetes: by using the “Plate Method” at meals. It will help you focus on eating non-starchy vegetables, less starchy grains and meats or protein foods. It works at home or when eating out.

Draw an imaginary line down the middle of your dinner plate. Then divide half the plate in two, so you have three sections. Fill the largest with non-starchy vegetables. Fill one of the smaller portions with whole grains or starchy vegetables, and the other with protein foods like meat, fish, eggs or tofu.

Movin’ and Groovin’

Having diabetes means that staying physically active is really important. Not only will it make you feel good – being active will actually give you more energy. It can help you lose weight, keep your blood sugar under control and lower your blood pressure. By doing these things, you can prevent or delay future problems.

Before you ramp up your exercise program, check with your PCP about how to prevent low blood sugar, which can sometimes occur with unusual activity. Your PCP may tell you to eat a small snack with carbs before, during or after exercising, and you may need to check your blood sugar level at these times.



The National Institutes of Health recommend exercising at least 30 minutes a day moderately (it will feel somewhat hard) or vigorously (it will feel intense and difficult). To lose weight, you may need to put in 60 minutes a day of exercise. Focus on how good it makes you feel!



Home Free

Diabetes is a disease which can affect every part of your life. But smart planning and follow-through with medications, diet, exercise and testing can put you on track to one of life’s greatest adventures: long-lasting good health!