Getting the Most out of Health Care Visits

Working with your diabetes care team.

You are the most important member of your diabetes care team. You do the day-to-day things to manage diabetes, like choosing healthy foods, being physically active, taking your medication, and checking your blood sugar (blood glucose) to help stay on track.

The other members of your diabetes care team are there to answer your questions and provide insights. They can tell you about your treatment options and help you stay up to date with your physical exams and lab tests.

You and your diabetes care team can work together to make a plan that helps you manage your diabetes.

Other people that may be part of your care team include:

- Doctor (primary care or endocrinologist)
- Nurse
- Registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN)
- Diabetes care and education specialist (DCES)
- Eye doctor (optometrist or ophthalmologist)
- Foot doctor (podiatrist)
- Pharmacist
- Dentist
- Social worker
- Therapist
- Personal trainer

What to expect at your visits?

At every office visit you should discuss the following:

- Talk about your blood glucose meter readings.
- Discuss changes in your blood sugar levels, especially high or low trends that may be happening at the same time of the day or days of the week.
- Check your blood pressure.
- Check your weight.
- Talk about what you eat.
- Discuss any recent changes in your day-to-day life or work.
- Discuss your physical activity.
- If you use nicotine, talk about ways to quit. This includes cigarettes and e-cigarettes and other forms of tobacco (call 1-800-QUIT-NOW for other resources).
- Discuss your prescribed medications and over the counter pills, herbs, vitamins, or supplements.
- Bring up any physical or emotional issues you are having such as trouble sleeping or feeling stress.
- Ask your questions and have them answered.

What to do before your visit?

- Make a list of your questions.
- Make a list of the medications (both prescribed and over-the-counter), vitamins, and supplements you take, or bring them with you in a bag.
- List when, why, and how much you take of each medication and if you need any refills.

What to bring with you?

- Your blood glucose meter, blood sugar log, and questions.
- Your lists of medications, vitamins, and anything else you are taking.
- Your food and exercise log if you keep one.

What else should you consider to stay healthy

At least twice per year:

- Get your A1C checked

At least once per year:

- Have a dilated eye exam.
- Get a flu shot.
- Have a complete foot exam.
- Check your kidney function.

At least once in a lifetime and again after turning 65:

- Get a pneumonia vaccine.

Other vaccinations you may need:

- Tdap vaccine: A booster shot for adults that immunizes against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis.
- Hepatitis B vaccine: Protects against hepatitis B, a highly contagious virus that causes lifelong illness.
- Zoster vaccine: Also known as the shingles vaccine, is recommended for anyone 50 or older.

Ask about meeting with a diabetes care and education specialist

Diabetes requires daily self-care. Figuring out how to make diabetes self-care fit into your daily routine can be overwhelming. A diabetes care and education specialist can help you manage all the daily tasks of caring for your diabetes, including:

- How to manage blood sugar day to day.
- How to make food choices that keep your blood sugar in your target range.
- What to do when your blood sugar is out of your target range (high or low).
- When you need to get more help.

Both the American Diabetes Association® (ADA) and the Association of Diabetes Care & Education Specialists certify high quality diabetes self-management education and support (DSMES) programs. These programs meet quality standards approved by Medicare and Medicaid services. To find a program near you, call the ADA at 1-800-DIABETES or go to diabetes.org/findaprogram for recognized programs across the country.

"A diabetes care and education specialist can help you manage all the daily tasks of caring for your diabetes."