



DIABETES SELF-CARE GUIDE

Take control of your health today!



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Being diagnosed with diabetes can be scary, sad, or hard to believe.

You may feel fine and have a tough time understanding why you need to make any changes to your life. Learning to manage your diabetes will not happen overnight, but there are a lot of things you can do to take control of your diabetes today.

The first step to taking control of your health is receiving high-quality diabetes education. Just like your health care providers and care coordinator, certified diabetes care and education specialists will be a critical part of your diabetes care team. If you are newly diagnosed or just newly motivated, you should:



Attend Diabetes Self-Management Education (DSME) classes, available in Covington, Crittenden, and Greendale, Indiana.



Meet with a registered dietitian at least annually- available in Covington, Crittenden, Greendale, Indiana, and virtually.



Meet regularly with your health care providers and ask questions.



Read trusted materials and websites (see *resources page*).



Write down a list of questions or concerns, and bring them to your follow-up appointments.

WHAT IS DIABETES?

Diabetes is a problem that causes blood glucose (*sugar*) levels to rise higher than normal. This is also called hyperglycemia. Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of diabetes.

How does it happen?



When you eat, your body breaks food down into glucose and sends it into the blood.



Insulin, a hormone made in your pancreas, helps move the glucose from your blood into your blood cells as fuel for energy.



When you have type 2 diabetes, your body has trouble using the insulin it is making or may not make enough, causing your blood glucose to rise higher than normal.



At first, your pancreas makes more insulin to make up for this. But over time, it isn't able to keep your blood glucose levels in a normal range.



When blood glucose levels stay high for long periods of time, it can cause serious problems and put you at risk for long-term health problems.

Helpful tip:

Keep your blood sugar in a healthy range as much of the time as possible!

TYPE 1 VS. TYPE 2 DIABETES

Type 1 Diabetes

- Can be diagnosed at any age.
- The pancreas stops making insulin.
- Second most common form of diabetes after type 2.
- Must take insulin injections to control blood sugar levels.

Type 2 Diabetes

- Usually diagnosed in adults but can also be in children.
- 90% of people living with diabetes have type 2.
- Family history and obesity are common risk factors of type 2 diabetes.
- The body may have trouble using the insulin it is making or is not making enough to control blood sugar levels.
- Changes over time; healthy eating & physical activity may be enough to control blood sugar levels for a period of time.
- Most people end up needing medications to control their blood sugar levels.
- Treatments include a healthy eating plan, regular exercise, pills, and/or injected medications.

Why do I need to pay attention to my diabetes?

Not keeping your blood sugar levels in a healthy range as much of the time as possible can lead to heart attack, stroke, eye problems, sexual dysfunction, kidney problems, nerve problems and slow healing.

CHECKING BLOOD SUGAR

When should I check my blood sugar?

Ask your health care provider how often & when you should check your blood sugar. Depending on your diabetes medications and your blood sugar control, you may be asked to check a few times a week up to 4 times a day.

What should my blood sugar be?

Checking your blood sugar gives you important information about your diabetes control! Targets set by the American Diabetes Association (ADA) are 80-130 before meals & below 180 two hours after the start of a meal. Ask your health care provider what your goal blood sugar ranges should be.

Helpful Tip:

Always wash your hands with soap & water before each fingerstick!

My Diabetes Plan

I should check my blood sugar _____ times a _____ at these times:

- Fasting when I wake up, before I've had anything to eat or drink.
- Before meals.
- 2 hours after the start of a meal.
- At bedtime.
- Other: _____.

Blood Sugar Goals

Time	ADA* Goals	My Goals
Before meals	80 to 130	___ to ___
2 hours after the start of a meal	Below 180	___ to ___

* Source: American Diabetes Association, 2021

WHAT IS AN A1C TEST?

Your A1C is just one way to tell if your diabetes is under control.

It tells your average blood sugar level over the past 2-3 months. The ADA recommends an A1C below 7% for adults living with diabetes. Ask your health care provider for this test at least twice a year. If your A1C is too high, you may need a change in your diabetes care plan.

What does my A1C number mean?

Find your A1C number on the left and compare to the number on the right to see your estimated average blood sugar for the past 2 to 3 months.

A1C	Estimated Average Blood Sugar (mg/dl)
6%	126
7%	154
8%	183
9%	212
10%	240
11%	269
12%	298

My Diabetes Plan

ADA* A1C Goal

Below 7%

My A1C Goal

My Results

A1C: Date Taken:

A1C: Date Taken:

A1C: Date Taken:

A1C: Date Taken:

A1C: Date Taken:

A1C: Date Taken:

A1C: Date Taken:

HYPOGLYCEMIA (low blood sugar)

When can low blood sugar happen?

Low blood sugar can happen if you've skipped a meal or snack, eaten less than usual, taken too much medication, or have been more physically active than usual. A low blood sugar that needs action is anything below 70. A severe low blood sugar is below 50. This is an emergency!

What should I do?

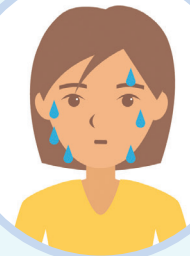
Follow the "15-15 rule":

- Eat or drink 15 grams of fast-acting carbohydrates (see examples on next page) to raise your blood sugar and then check it after 15 minutes.
- If it is still below 70, have another 15 grams of fast-acting carbohydrates.
- Repeat these steps until your blood sugar is back over 70.
- Once it is over 70, eat a meal or snack that has carbohydrates and protein or fat to make sure it does not drop again.

Signs of LOW blood sugar:



Sleepiness



Sweating



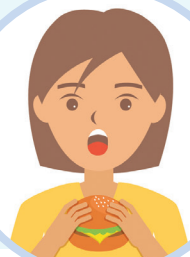
Pallor



Lack of coordination



Irritability



Hunger

HYPOGLYCEMIA (low blood sugar)

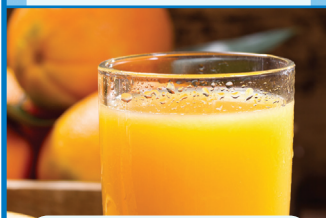
Examples of 15 grams of fast-acting carbohydrates:



4 glucose tablets



15 gram tube of glucose gel



1/2 cup (4 oz) of orange juice or 1 juice box



1 bag of kids/snack size fruit snacks



1/2 can (6 oz) of regular soda



15 Skittles or 8 Sweetarts



5 gummy Life Savers or 4 Starbursts



4 teaspoons of sugar



1 tablespoon of honey or syrup (not sugar-free)



1/2 cup (4 oz) of apple juice or 1 juice box

My Diabetes Plan

Talk to your health care provider about when you should report low blood sugars to their office.

I should call my health care provider if:

Phone number: _____

Helpful tip:

Do not use chocolate, peanut butter, or high fat sweet foods to treat a low blood sugar...

as the fat content will slow down how quickly your blood sugar rises.

HYPERGLYCEMIA (high blood sugar)

When can high blood sugar happen?

A high blood sugar is any blood sugar that is above your goal blood sugar range. High blood sugars can happen if you eat a meal or snack with more food or more carbohydrates than usual, from physical inactivity, missing or skipping doses of your diabetes medications, side effects of other medicines (like steroids), infection or illness, hormonal changes (such as during menstrual periods), and stress.

What should I do?

Stay well hydrated with water and call your health care provider if your blood sugars are consistently outside of your goal range.

My Diabetes Plan

I should call my health care provider if my blood sugar levels are above:

Phone number:

Signs of HIGH blood sugar:



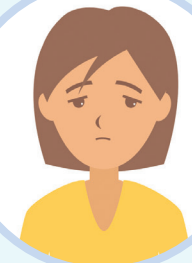
Dry mouth



Increased thirst



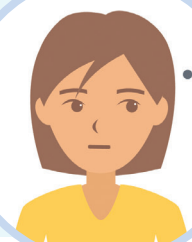
Blurred vision



Weakness



Headache



Frequent urination

SICK DAY CARE

When you get sick or have an infection, the stress from it causes your body to release hormones that raise blood sugar levels, making it harder to keep your blood sugar in your target range. Though having diabetes does not make you more likely to get a cold or flu, it does raise your chances of getting seriously sick. Having a plan for sick days ahead of time will help you manage your diabetes and make additional complications less likely.

What do I need to have to be prepared for a sick day?



Extra testing supplies, such as lancets and strips (*more than you think you will need*).



Plenty of water or sugar-free beverages.



Snacks with carbs in case you are unable to eat full meals.



Ketone test strips (*if your health care provider recommends ketone testing*).



A week's worth of all of your diabetes medications.



Any over the counter medications that your health care provider approved of you taking when sick.



Emergency information such as your health care provider's phone number, a current list of all your medications with doses, and your insurance information.

Use this page as a guide to keep on hand for when you become ill. We recommend reviewing it with your health care provider & posting it on your refrigerator for when you need it!

What to do when you get sick:



Check your blood sugar more often than normal, such as every 3-4 hours while sick.



Stay well hydrated, aiming for 1 cup (8 ounces) of water or sugar-free beverage hourly while sick.



Take all of your diabetes medications, including insulin, unless your health care provider tells you not to; do not skip medications even if you are not eating normally.



If you take insulin, you may be told to take extra injections of insulin and to test your ketones every 2 hours while your blood sugar is over 250.



Make sure you are eating some carbohydrates, ideally 15 grams hourly while awake. Examples include 1 slice of toast, 1 cup sports drink, or 6 saltine crackers.

My Diabetes Plan

When should I call when sick?

My health care provider: _____
911: _____

How often should I check my blood sugar when sick?

I should check my blood sugar every: _____

How should I take my diabetes medications when sick?

What over-the-counter medications can I take?

Do I need to test for ketones when sick?

No Yes, every 4-6 hours while I am sick.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity is important for your health and blood sugar control.

Even a small increase in activity can make a big difference. Make sure you have your care provider's permission to begin an exercise program.

Why should I be more active?

Being more active can help to:

- ✓ Improve blood sugar control.
- ✓ Improve blood pressure.
- ✓ Reduce your chances of heart disease.
- ✓ Manage a healthy body weight.
- ✓ Strengthen bones, muscles and improve balance.
- ✓ Increase energy and relieve stress.
- ✓ Improve how one looks and feels.

*Helpful Tip:
Check your blood sugar before beginning any exercise, always carry a carbohydrate snack with you and stay hydrated.*

Fitness tips:



Get started slowly and safely. If you haven't been very active or are worried about your health, it's important to consult your health care provider and start slowly.



Light walking is a great place to start and a great habit to incorporate into your life.



Sitting for long periods is bad for your health. To remind you to regularly get out of your seat, set an alarm on your phone for every half hour. Once up, march in place, dance, roll your shoulders, or take a quick walk!



Try exercise videos, fitness video games, or free fitness apps that will allow you to work out in the comfort of your home.



Have a Medicare Advantage Plan? Check out their Silver Sneakers program designed for adults 65 years of age and up at [silversneakers.com](https://www.silversneakers.com) or by calling (866) 584-7389.

NUTRITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS



Protein



Carbohydrates



Nonstarchy Veggies

How should I eat to best manage my blood sugars?

- ✓ Use a 9-inch plate to guide your portion sizes and food choices.
- ✓ Eat within 1-2 hours of waking and space your meals every 4-5 hours throughout the day to keep blood sugar levels steady.
- ✓ Choose water and other non-sugar containing drinks. Avoid sweet tea, regular soda, juices, and other sweet drinks like Gatorade and fruit punch.
- ✓ Learn to read food labels and use food database apps to help determine portion sizes and carbohydrate amounts.

Helpful Tip:
Check nutrition labels.

- Look at the serving size.
- Look at the total carbohydrates.

Nutrition Facts	
1 servings per container	
Serving size	12 Fl. Oz. (355g)
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	150
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 10mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 8g	3%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Total Sugars 8g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 0g	0%
<small>Not a significant source of vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium</small>	
<small>*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.</small>	

NUTRITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Why do carbohydrates matter?

Carbohydrates make the blood sugars rise. Limiting the amount of carbohydrates you eat can help to control your blood sugars. However, there is no one-size-fits-all amount for how many carbohydrates you should eat. Talk to your health care provider about placing a referral to a Registered Dietitian who can work with you to provide individualized recommendations for how many grams of carbohydrates you should consume for meals and snacks.

My Diabetes Plan

I should aim to eat grams of carbohydrates at each meal.

My snacks should contain no more than grams of carbohydrates.

Serving sizes with 15 grams of carbs:

Starchy Vegetables

1/4 large baked potato

1/2 cup peas or corn

1/3 cup baked beans

Fruits

1 cup raspberries

3/4 cup pineapple

1 small apple or orange

Starch/Grains

1/3 cup cooked pasta

1 slice whole-grain bread

1/2 cup cooked oats (oatmeal)

1/3 cup cooked rice

RESOURCES

Websites

- American Diabetes Association Living with Type 2 Diabetes Program: diabetes.org or call (800) 342-2383
- Diabetes Life- Diabetes information on food, fitness, and resources: dlife.com
- Association of Diabetes Care & Education Specialists- Resources for people living with diabetes: diabeteseducator.org/living-with-diabetes

Books

- Diabetes Burnout: What to Do When You Can't Take It Anymore by William H. Polonsky
- Dealing with Diabetes Burnout: How to Recharge and Get Back on Track When You Feel Frustrated and Overwhelmed Living with Diabetes by Ginger Vieira
- The Calorie King- Calorie, Fat and Carbohydrate Counter

Magazines

- Diabetes Forecast- Published by the American Diabetes Association
- Diabetes Self-Management- Advice, news, and strategies for living with Diabetes

Apps

- Calorie King (for iPhone)- Free carbohydrate and calorie counting app
- MyFitnessPal (for Android or iPhone)- Free nutrition and fitness tracking app
- GoMeals (for Android or iPhone)- Free nutrition, fitness, and blood sugar tracking app
- mySugr- Blood sugar monitoring app
- Glucose Buddy- Tools for tracking blood sugar, insulin, medication, food, and more

Fitness

- Silver Sneakers- Health and fitness program

designed for adults 65+; included with many Medicare Advantage Plans:

silversneakers.com or call (866) 584-7389

- American Council on Exercise: acefitness.org
- Spark People- Nutrition, exercise, and health information: sparkpeople.com

Miscellaneous

- Non-traditional and trendy styles medical ID bracelets: laurenshope.com
- American Medical- Medical ID bracelets: americanmedical-id.com

Nutrition

- Calorie King (book, app, or website)- Carbohydrate counting resource: calorieking.com
- choosemyplate.gov
- eatright.org

Nutrition Affordability

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap
- St. Elizabeth Care Coordination: (859) 655-8813

Mental Health

- St. Elizabeth Behavioral Health: (859) 301-5901
- North Key (Kentucky Medical Card or no insurance; not commercial insurance): northkey.org or call (859) 331-3292
- National Alliance on Mental Illness: nami.org

Tobacco Cessation

- smokefree.gov
- 1-800-QUITNOW
- Fresh Start Program at St. Elizabeth: stelizabeth.com/healthyheadlines/quit-smoking-2019-freshstart-program/

READY TO LEARN MORE?

Checking your blood sugar. Watching what you eat. Staying active. The daily concerns and complications of life with diabetes and other endocrine conditions are a constant reminder of each patient's complex journey. Diabetes is a disease that changes over time. With each change comes the need for new knowledge, skills and adjustments in your management plan. At the Regional Diabetes Center, the St. Elizabeth Physicians team of 25 practitioners, including board-certified endocrinologists, clinical experts, and diabetes care & education specialists, stand at the ready to answer your care questions and help you live a better life.

To schedule, please call us at (859) 655-8910.

St. Elizabeth Physicians Regional Diabetes Center
1500 James Simpson Jr. Way, Suite 301, Covington, KY 41011

St. Elizabeth Physicians Care Coordination
1360 Dolwick Drive Suite 200
Erlanger KY 41018
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