

Living with Type 2 Diabetes

Type 2 diabetes is a long-term (chronic) condition. Managing diabetes may mean making some tough changes. Your healthcare team can help you.

In type 2 diabetes, your body does not use insulin properly. Some people with type 2 can control their blood glucose with healthy eating and being active. You will also need check your blood sugar. And work with your healthcare provider to prevent complications.

Take your medicine

You may take pills or give yourself insulin shots for diabetes. Or you may use both. Take your medicines or give yourself insulin at the right times to help you control your blood sugar. Think about ways that will help you remember to take your medicines the right way every day. Ask your healthcare provider or team for ideas.

You may only take pills for your diabetes. But this may change. Over time, most people with type 2 diabetes also need insulin.

Eat healthy

A healthy diet helps control the amount of sugar in your blood. It also helps you stay at a healthy weight. Or it helps you lose weight, if if you're overweight. Extra weight makes it harder to control diabetes.

Your healthcare team will help you create a plan that works for you. You don't have to give up all the foods you like. Have meals and snacks with:

- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Lean meats or other healthy proteins
- Whole grains
- Low- or nonfat dairy products

Be physically active

Being active helps lower your blood sugar. Activity helps your body use insulin to turn food into energy. It also helps you manage your weight:

Ask your doctor to help you to make an activity program that's right for you. Your program is based on your age, general health, and types of activity you enjoy. Start slow. But aim for at least 150 minutes of exercise or activity each week. Start with 30 minutes a day. Exercise in 10-minute blocks. Don't let more than 2 days go by without being active.

Check your blood sugar

Checking your own blood sugar may be a regular part of your care. Or you may only need to check your blood sugar from time to time. Your healthcare provider will tell you how to check your blood sugar at home. Checking it tells you if your blood sugar is in your target range. Having your blood sugars within the target range means that you are managing your diabetes well.

If your blood sugar levels are too high or too low, your doctor may suggest changes to your diet or activity level. He or she may also adjust your medicine.

Your doctor may also tell you to check your blood sugar more often when you are sick.

Take care of yourself

When you have diabetes, you may be more likely to get other health problems. They include foot, eye, heart, nerve, and kidney problems. You can help prevent these problems by controlling your blood sugar and taking good care of yourself. Your doctor, nurse, diabetes educator, and others can help you with the following:

- **Checkups.** You should have regular checkups with your doctor. At those visits, you will have a physical exam that includes checking your feet. Your doctor will also check your blood pressure and weight. Take your shoes off before your appointment starts to be sure your feet are checked.
- **Other exams.** You'll also need eye, foot, and dental exams at least once each year.
- **Lab tests.** You will have blood and urine tests:
 - Your doctor will check your hemoglobin A1C at least twice a year. This blood test shows how well you have been controlling your blood sugar over 2 to 3 months. The results help your healthcare provider manage your diabetes.
 - You will also have other lab tests. For example, to check for kidney problems and abnormal cholesterol levels.
- **Smoking.** If you smoke, you will need to quit. Smoking makes it more likely to get complications from diabetes. Ask your doctor about ways to quit.
- **Vaccines.** Get a yearly flu shot. And ask your healthcare provider about vaccines to prevent pneumonia, shingles, and hepatitis B.

Stress and depression

Most people have challenges throughout their lives. Living with diabetes can increase your stress. Feeling stressed or depressed can actually affect your blood sugar levels.

Tell your doctor if you are having trouble coping with diabetes. He or she can help or refer you to other providers or programs.

How type 2 is different from type 1?

In type 1, your body treats the cells that make insulin as invaders and destroys them. This can happen over a few weeks, months, or years. When enough of the cells are gone, your pancreas makes little or no insulin and blood glucose becomes dangerously high. People with type 1 diabetes take insulin by injection with a syringe, an insulin pen, or an insulin pump.