

## Tips for Teens with Diabetes

# Dealing With the Ups and Downs of Diabetes

National Diabetes Education Program



Feel good about yourself.  
Get help to deal with the ups and downs of diabetes.  
Seek support from other teens and take action to manage your diabetes—one step at a time.

Feel better about yourself and your diabetes: talk to others, involve your family, and health care team.

*Take Charge!*

Find out how ➔

# Take it one step at a time!

## Feelings

Many teens like you deal with diabetes everyday. Most of the time, it's not a problem, you just deal with it. But sometimes, you may just want it to go away.

Do you ever...

- Ask "why me?"
- Think you're the only one who feels sad, mad, alone, afraid, or different?
- Get tired of others teasing you if you are overweight?
- Blame yourself or your family for your diabetes?

All of these feelings are normal. Lots of teens who have diabetes feel the same way. It's okay to get angry, feel sad, or think you're different every now and then. But then you need to take charge and do something to feel better.

**Everyone feels down sometimes. You are not alone.**



**Don't  
let  
diabetes  
stop you!**

## Still down? **Reach out for help.** Talk to



someone in your family or where you worship, a friend, a school counselor, teacher, or your doctor or diabetes educator. It might help to write down your feelings in a journal. If you still feel down or sad, ask your parents to help you find a counselor.  
**It is okay to ask for help.**

**reach  
out**

**Speak up** There are many people who care about you and want to help you stay healthy and happy. Your health care team (diabetes educator, dietitian, doctor, nurse, psychologist, and social worker) can help you learn how to make healthy food choices, be more active, and feel good about yourself. Stay in touch with them. **Let your health care team know how you feel and what you need.**



## Mom, Dad, other family members, *get with it!*

It's easier to manage diabetes when the whole family works at it with you. So...

- **Ask your family to choose the same healthy foods you eat**—fruits and vegetables; whole grain breads; and low-fat meats, milk, and cheese. Ask them to keep healthy foods in the house and not tempt you with cookies, cake, candy, or regular soda.
- **Get everyone moving by being more physically active.** Play hard. Shoot hoops, throw a ball, ride bikes, or go for a walk—together. Being active can also help you relax and lower stress.

**What's healthy for you is healthy for everyone in your family.**

## Let your school know what's up

You or your parents need to give the school nurse, teacher, or other school staff a copy of your diabetes care plan. Let people at your school know you have diabetes and that you need to eat healthy foods, eat your meals, take your medicine on time, and be physically active.

Don't let diabetes stop you from joining in school activities. **You can do all the things your friends do and then some!**

## Want to meet other teens who feel like you do?

- Programs and support groups for teens with diabetes can be found in clinics, health centers, or hospitals. Ask your diabetes educator or doctor for help to find one that works for you.
- Head to a diabetes or weight loss summer camp. You will do all the things that other campers do: swim, hike, dance, and more. But the best part is that everyone has diabetes or is there to lose weight, just like you. Some groups may have funds to help pay for teens to attend summer camps.
- Find a pen pal or email buddy. Sometimes it is good to share how you feel about having diabetes with someone else.
- Check out the resources at the end of this tip sheet.

be active



set goals

## Still my friend?

Ever worry that your friends may have wrong ideas about diabetes?

- Tell them that you have diabetes. You don't have to keep it to yourself. The more people know about diabetes, the more they will understand. Explain that your body needs help to use the food you eat.
- Be sure everyone knows that no one can catch diabetes from you.
- Good friends help each other out. They understand your needs and offer support. Hang on to friends who help you make healthy food choices when you are eating out.



Ever have kids make fun of you about your diabetes or weight?

**Teasing hurts. The best thing is to just walk away.**

talk to someone...write down your feelings in a journal...write to a pen pal...email a buddy...stay in touch

## Take Action!

It's time for **YOU** to do something about your diabetes care.

- **Set goals for what you will do.** Start small and work your way up. For example: "I will cut down on regular soda and drink water instead." When that's going well...take the next step. Add another goal—"I will dance or bike ride a couple of times a week." Then add a new goal—"I will eat smaller servings of cookies, burgers, and fries."
- **Try to make each new goal just a bit harder.** After you shoot hoops twice a week, try adding another activity on three other days. Raise the goal until you reach a level that works for you.
- **Avoid goals that will be too hard to meet.** For example, rather than saying you'll never eat a burger or a candy bar again, say you'll only eat one a week.
- **Tell your family or friends about your goals.** Maybe they'll be active with you or help out some other way.
- **Reward yourself when you reach each goal.** Keep in mind that rewards can be anything—not just food. You do not have to reach all your goals at once. Start with one or two, then add more.

**Write down your top three goals—use the chart on the back page!**





Write down your  
**Top 3 Goals**

Choose goals that you really can meet. Put in the date when you set the goal and when you met it.

**Goal 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

Date set: \_\_\_\_\_

Date met: \_\_\_\_\_

**Goal 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

Date set: \_\_\_\_\_

Date met: \_\_\_\_\_

**Goal 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

Date set: \_\_\_\_\_

Date met: \_\_\_\_\_

**Got it!** Take it one step at a time. Make healthy food choices, be more active, and work towards a healthy weight. Soon you'll see progress and feel great.

Special thanks to the teens who helped create this tip sheet

Francine Kaufman, M.D., Head, Center for Diabetes, Endocrinology and Metabolism at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles, and Janet Silverstein, M.D., Professor and Chief, Pediatric Endocrinology, Department of Pediatrics, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, reviewed this material for technical accuracy.

**Learn more!**

**Check out...**

**National Diabetes Education Program**

for free copies of other tip sheets for teens:

- *What is Diabetes?*
- *Stay at a Healthy Weight*
- *Be Active*
- *Make Healthy Food Choices*
- *Lower Your Risk for Type 2 Diabetes*

[www.YourDiabetesInfo.org](http://www.YourDiabetesInfo.org) • 1-888-693-NDEP

**Camps** for young people with diabetes

[www.diabetescamps.org](http://www.diabetescamps.org)

**Parks and Recreation Youth Programs** where you live

Type the name of your town or city followed by "parks and recreation youth programs" into an online search engine.

**American Diabetes Association (ADA)** for help to manage diabetes

[www.diabetes.org/planetD](http://www.diabetes.org/planetD)

- Local ADA: [www.diabetes.org/in-my-community/](http://www.diabetes.org/in-my-community/) or 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383)
- Write to ADA's *Diabetes Forecast* Pen Pal Coordinator: P.O. Box 675, Gainesville, VA 20156

**Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics** to find a dietitian near you

[www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org) • 1-800-366-1655

**Bam! Body and Mind** website for ten tips to help you keep your cool

[www.bam.gov/sub\\_yourlife/yourlife\\_feelingfrazzled.html](http://www.bam.gov/sub_yourlife/yourlife_feelingfrazzled.html)

**Children With Diabetes** website for pen pals and more for kids and families with diabetes

[www.childrenwithdiabetes.com](http://www.childrenwithdiabetes.com)

**Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation**

**International** for pen pals and help to manage diabetes

[www.jdrf.org](http://www.jdrf.org) • 1-800-533-CURE (1-800-533-2873)

**National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse** for more about diabetes

[www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov) 1-800-860-8747

**WIN — Weight-control Information Network** for weight control help

- *Take Charge of Your Health! A Teenager's Guide to Better Health*

[www.win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/take\\_charge.htm](http://www.win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/take_charge.htm)

1-877-946-4627



[www.YourDiabetesInfo.org](http://www.YourDiabetesInfo.org)

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Diabetes Education Program is jointly sponsored by the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention with the support of more than 200 partner organizations. [www.YourDiabetesInfo.org](http://www.YourDiabetesInfo.org) or 1-888-693-NDEP