

Keeping Up With Diabetes

Diabetes often feels like a full-time job. Every day you make many choices and decisions that affect how you feel today as well as your long-term health. The more you know about diabetes, the easier it is to make informed decisions. Making wise choices means that you will be more likely to benefit from all of your hard work.

Learning About Diabetes

The first step is to learn all that you can about how to care for diabetes. Ask your health care provider for a referral to a diabetes education program in your area or contact your local American Diabetes Association (ADA) office for a list of support groups. Take a list of your questions and concerns with you to be sure that you get what you need from the sessions. As you listen, ask yourself if what you are hearing fits with your experience and how you can use the information in your own life to better manage your diabetes.

Online Resources

If you “Google” the word “diabetes,” you get more than 100 million hits! That’s overwhelming, and you cannot possibly look at all of them. There are informational sites, advertisements, chat rooms, and blogs. Two sites that are good starting points because they have reliable information are

the ADA website (www.diabetes.org) and the National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) website (www.yourdiabetesinfo.org).

The materials on the ADA website’s “All About Diabetes” section are generally free for downloading. There are also recipes and an “Ask the Expert” section where you can submit questions. Additional materials can be found in the “Shop for Books and Gifts” section under “Patient Booklets and Pamphlets.” These materials are not free, but they do cover a variety of topics and are written at different reading levels and in different languages.

The NDEP site also offers materials that are free for downloading in a variety of languages. Because materials on these sites were developed by experts and are free from bias, you can count on the information they provide to be accurate and up-to-date.

These are just two of the many websites that are available. When you look at websites, you can usually count on those developed by hospitals and other institutions (for example, the Mayo Clinic or the Joslin Diabetes Center), health care organizations (such as the American Heart Association), and some commercial sites (for example, WebMD) to offer accurate information.

Most drug companies also offer online information about their products. The “Patient Information” section of these sites is generally approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and gives information about safely taking the medicine and common side effects. Be cautious about sites that advertise products to improve blood glucose levels. Some of these are designed more to make sales than to educate. If you aren’t sure, take a copy to your health care providers or diabetes educator and ask their opinion.

Other Resources

If you do not use a computer or simply prefer to get information other ways, both the ADA and NDEP offer toll-free numbers where you can ask to have information sent to you. The ADA contact number is 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2387) and the NDEP contact number is 1-888-693-NDEP (1-888-693-6337).

There are also magazines to which you can subscribe and a wide selection of books about diabetes at your local bookstore. Check out the authors carefully to be sure they have the background to give accurate information.

Just as in other aspects of life, the important thing is to become an informed and wise consumer. Your efforts will pay off in the long run.

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