



Taking charge of  
**your child's diabetes.**

## **You can take charge of your child's diabetes.**

If your child has diabetes, you may have questions. What is diabetes? How is it treated? Will they always have to take medicine?

Read this booklet with your child and learn about diabetes. The more you both know, the easier managing diabetes can be.

Together, you and your child can take charge of diabetes.



## 4 simple steps to help you and your child take charge:



Learn about diabetes.



Know the diabetes ABCs.



Manage your child's diabetes.



Take extra care.



**Health log:** Check out the health log on page 14 of this booklet. Use it to track your child's health information. Be sure to bring it to your child's next doctor visit.

# 1



## Learn about diabetes.

Diabetes happens when your blood glucose is too high. Blood glucose is the same thing as blood sugar. Everyone needs some glucose, or sugar. It gives the body energy to keep going. But too much is not healthy. It can be a serious health problem.

Glucose comes from the food you eat. It's also made in your liver and muscles. Insulin is a chemical the body makes. Insulin attaches to your body's cells to absorb glucose from the bloodstream. The cells then turn glucose into energy.

Without proper insulin, the glucose doesn't make it into the cells. It just stays in the blood and the blood sugar level gets too high. This results in diabetes.

### The 2 most common types of diabetes are:

#### **Type 1.**

There is little or no insulin made by the pancreas. Type 1 is most often seen in young people.

#### **Type 2.**

There's not enough insulin. Or the body can't use insulin the way it should.



### **Medicines.**

If your child has diabetes, their doctor may prescribe one or more medicines. Some can help control blood sugar. Some can help avoid other health risks. Talk to your doctor about what medicines are right for your child.

**Diabetes medicines treat diabetes.** They help control blood sugar. Some are taken as a pill. Others, like insulin, are taken as a shot.

**Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitor or angiotensin receptor blocker (ARB) medicines** lower blood pressure and reduce strain on the heart. They may also reduce the risk of having a heart attack or dying from heart disease.

**Statins** lower cholesterol, called LDL. Statins work to keep arteries clear and open.



Kids are always growing and changing. Their diabetes treatment plan must change with them. Work closely with your child's doctor so changes can be made as they grow.





### **Your child's care provider.**

A primary care provider (PCP) may be the doctor you see for all your child's health concerns. If you don't have one, call the number on the back of your health plan member ID card. They can help you find one.

In some cases you may be referred to a specialist called an endocrinologist.

The PCP or specialist is critical to managing your child's diabetes. They will:

- Set the goal for your child's blood sugar levels. These numbers are different by age and other factors, so it's important to work with a doctor as your child grows and changes.
- Prescribe medicines, help plan a daily food diet and give exercise suggestions. These will help control your child's blood sugar.
- Teach you how to test and monitor your child's blood sugar level.
- Create action plans for when the blood sugar level is too high or too low.
- Tell you what doctor visits or tests your child needs, including A1C level tests that show if the diabetes is under control.

## Working well with your child's doctor.

Consider these tips to make the most of doctor visits. This will help you and the doctor get the information needed to manage your child's diabetes.



1

### **Bring a list of everything your child takes. It may affect the treatment plan.**

- Prescription medicines.
- Over-the-counter medicines.
- Supplements or herbs.
- Vitamins.

2

### **Bring your child's blood sugar level records and your child's Diabetes Health Log.**

Talk about any changes that might be needed to your child's treatment plan.

3

### **Bring a list of all your questions for the doctor.**

Bring a pen and paper to write down important things the doctor tells you.

4

### **Be sure your doctor:**

- Tells you steps to take to keep your child healthy.
- Creates a plan to treat your child's diabetes.
- Answers your questions.
- Listens to your concerns.

# 2



## Know the diabetes ABCs.

Control your child's A1C (blood sugar test), blood pressure and cholesterol. This may help to lower the chances of other diabetes problems.

Reach your child's ABC goals.

- Talk with your child's doctor about their ABC goals.
- Keep track of your child's ABC goals and results.
- Go to your child's doctor visits.
- Get your child's labs when they are due.



### A is for A1C test.

**This is a blood test** that tells you the level of your child's blood sugar over a 2- to 3-month time. This test is different from testing your blood sugar at home with a meter. Your child's A1C test will be done at their doctor's office or lab.

- The goal for most people is **less than 7%**.
- Your child should have an A1C test at least 2 times a year.





## **B is for blood pressure.**

**If your child's blood pressure is high**, it means that your heart is working harder. This puts you at higher risk for diabetes problems like kidney and eye problems.

- The goal for most people with diabetes is a blood pressure of **130/80 or below**.
- You should have your child's blood pressure checked each time they visit the doctor.



## **C is for cholesterol.**

**Cholesterol-LDL** is the bad cholesterol that builds up in your child's blood vessels. It causes your blood vessels to get smaller and harder. Cholesterol is tested by a blood test. The test takes place at your child's doctor's office or lab.

- The cholesterol-LDL goal for people with diabetes is **less than 100**.
- You should have your child's cholesterol-LDL checked at least once a year.

# 3



## Manage your child's diabetes.

Diabetes may be managed with a combination of medicine, meal planning and exercise. Managing it well can help prevent emergency situations like passing out or seizures. It can also help avoid serious health problems down the road.



### Monitor blood sugar.

You may need to check your child's blood sugar. How often depends on the type of diabetes and the medicines used to manage it. Do it just how the doctor tells you.



### Use prescribed medicine as directed.

Follow the doctor's instructions for when to take it and how much to take.



### Plan meals and snacks.

- Learn what foods are good for your child and which are not. Work with the doctor to create a meal plan.
- Ask if you should count the number of carbohydrates (carbs) your child eats. Carbs raise blood sugar. They are in foods such as pasta, bread and cereal.



### **Make sure your child is active.**

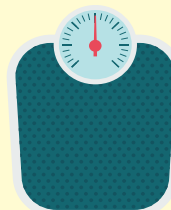
- Talk to the doctor about exercise and activities for your child.
- Ask if blood sugar should be checked during active times.



### **Keep good records.**



**Ask the doctor if your child is at a healthy weight. A healthy weight is important to managing diabetes.**



# 4



## Take extra care.

### When your child is sick.

Colds. Flu. Upset stomach. Everyone gets sick from time to time. But with diabetes, common illnesses can turn dangerous.

Watch blood sugar levels carefully when your child is sick. The body fights sickness by releasing hormones. These hormones can increase blood sugar levels. Or your child may not eat the way they normally do. This can stop the diabetes medicine from working properly and cause low blood sugar. Very high or very low blood sugar can lead to a diabetic coma. High blood sugar can also lead to diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA). DKA is most common with type 1 diabetes.

While your child is sick, make sure you help them:

- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Keep checking blood sugar.
- Try to eat according to their meal plan.
- Take their prescribed medicine like always.



Your child may start feeling different from others. Your child may stop seeing friends, deny he or she has diabetes or feel angry about it. Recognize these changes and learn how to help.

## At day care, school and beyond.

Day cares and schools can help kids with diabetes, but it's important for parents to be involved. Make sure these places have what they need to help your child.



Here are some tips to help you prepare for your child to attend day care, school and beyond:

- **Ask your doctor** about a diabetes care plan for school or day care. It should include signs to watch for low and high blood sugar, and a plan for emergencies.
- **Work with the school or day care** on meals, snacks, gym time and blood sugar testing.
- **Help your child learn about diabetes.** Talk about any worries or concerns. This will help your child feel confident and in control around others.
- **Work with your child** to manage his or her diabetes as he or she becomes more independent.



**Call the doctor if your child's blood sugar numbers go outside of their guidelines. The doctor may need to adjust the medicine dosage while your child is sick.**





## Common Questions.

Kids with diabetes may have questions or concerns. Be sure to discuss them with the doctor.

### **Q: Does it hurt to get shots?**

A: Shots can be quick and easy. They are important for your child's health. If your child can learn to relax, it won't hurt as much.

### **Q: How long will I have diabetes?**

A: Diabetes is a lifelong condition. But with proper treatment and healthy lifestyle changes, it can be managed.

### **Q: Can I do the same activities as other kids?**

A: Your child will likely be able to do the same activities and sports as other kids. But it may require planning. Blood sugar can drop during or after physical activity. Blood sugar may need to be checked often if your child has type 1 diabetes or is on an insulin treatment.

### **Q: Can I eat what other kids eat?**

A: Meal planning is key to eating some of the same foods other kids eat. Talk to the doctor to learn how to manage the extra carbs from foods commonly served at birthday or holiday parties.





### Other health problems.

Diabetes can cause serious foot or eye problems. Sores or cuts on feet can lead to bad infections. And high blood sugar over time makes blood vessels in the eye weak or they can even burst. That can lead to retinopathy, a condition that can cause blindness.

There are other issues related to diabetes too, such as nerve damage, kidney problems, heart disease and stroke. Your doctor will tell you which screenings or tests your child needs.



### Typical screenings and timing may be as follows:

- **Blood pressure.** Should be measured at each regular doctor's visit.
- **Diabetic kidney disease screening.** Get before or at 10 years of age or after a child has had diabetes for 5 years, whichever is sooner.
- **Lipid screening.** Get at 10 years of age or older, or soon after diagnosis. Repeat screening every 5 years if normal, and as recommended by your doctor.
- **Mental health screening.** Includes a check for coping, anxiety and diabetes distress generally starting at 7 or 8 years of age.
- **Thyroid dysfunction and celiac disease screenings.** May be recommended for type 1 diabetes — soon after diagnosis and regularly after that.



### **Help protect your child's feet.**

- Be sure the doctor does a complete foot exam at least once a year.
- Treat cuts right away. Wash with soap and water. Cover even small cuts with bandages.
- Don't allow your child to go barefoot. Make sure their shoes fit right.
- Wash your child's feet every day.
- Watch blisters, ingrown toenails or calluses carefully. They can lead to infection and wounds that won't heal.



### **Help protect your child's eyes.**

- Keep blood sugar under control.
- Watch blood pressure. Be sure it's as close to normal as possible.
- Visit an eye doctor as recommended by your child's doctor. An eye test can find problems even before you notice them.
- Ask when your child should have a test with dilated pupils.



### **See an eye doctor right away if your child has:**

- Blurry vision or vision changes from day to day.
- Dark or floating spots.
- Flashes of light.
- Any vision loss, including spots that are hazy and not clear.



**At day care, school and beyond.**

This chart will help you keep track of your child’s health “numbers.” Bring it to your child’s next doctor visit.

Exam	Date/Goal	Date/Finding	Date/Finding
Blood Pressure			
LDL Cholesterol			
HDL Cholesterol			
Total Cholesterol			
A1C			
Urine Protein			
Dilated Eye Exam			
Foot Exam			

Vaccinations	Date/Notes
<b>Pneumococcal (pneumonia)</b> Ask your doctor	
<b>Influenza (flu);</b> yearly	

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends the hepatitis B vaccine for people who have diabetes (ask your doctor).

Medications		
Name	Dose	Directions



## Helpful resources.



**For more information, visit these websites:**

**American Diabetes Association**

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

**National Diabetes Education Program**

[ndep.nih.gov](http://ndep.nih.gov)

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

[cdc.gov/diabetes](http://cdc.gov/diabetes)

**UnitedHealthcare Community Plan**

[myuhc.com/CommunityPlan](http://myuhc.com/CommunityPlan)

[UHCCommunityPlan.com/CA](http://UHCCommunityPlan.com/CA)



**Important contacts:**

**Doctor's name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Pharmacy:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Urgent Care:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Hospital:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**If there's an emergency, call 911.**



[UHCCommunityPlan.com/CA](https://UHCCommunityPlan.com/CA)



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References: American Diabetes Association, [diabetes.org](https://diabetes.org)

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