

CHRONIC CARE

# Diabetes

## Caring for a Loved One with Diabetes

CAREGIVER'S GUIDE

**Interim**  
HEALTHCARE®  
First in Home Care.®



Home Health and  
Personal Care

# You'll be their support. We'll be yours.

When a family member is diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, it's a lot to take in. They will need to make some major life changes to get their health under control. While this is tough news to hear, the good news is, their condition is completely treatable. In fact, if they follow the protocol for care, they can significantly lessen the symptoms of diabetes or eliminate them altogether.

As their caregiver, you play an integral role in their ability to manage their condition and move towards better health. Our Diabetes Caregiver's Guide was designed to educate family members on diabetes and the impact that diet, exercise, sleep, stress and medication has on their body's function. With a thorough understanding of their disease, you can help them make the changes necessary to prevent other health risks and learn how to successfully self-care for their condition.

At Interim HealthCare®, we understand the challenges that diabetics face and the positive difference that family can make in their health journey. This guide will supply the knowledge and insights you need to be the capable and compassionate caregiver they need.



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*“One in 10 Americans are living with diabetes.”*



## The Reality of Diabetes

Currently, more than 34 million Americans (one in 10 people) are living with diabetes and 90 to 95 percent of those diagnosed have type 2 diabetes.<sup>1</sup> Suffice to say, it is more common than many people realize, but left unmanaged, it can lead to serious and life-threatening health problems.

### What Type 2 Diabetes Means

When a family member is diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, it helps to understand what's happening in their body that causes it to respond differently. For those without diabetes, the body naturally transfers sugar from the bloodstream to the cells through a hormone called insulin. That sugar becomes energy that keep the cells alive. People with diabetes do not make enough insulin (or none at all) to effectively transfer the sugar from their blood to their cells, so it remains stuck in the bloodstream. This causes the high blood sugar that results in type 2 diabetes.

### Increased Health Risks

Perhaps the biggest concern for individuals diagnosed with diabetes is the increased risk of cardiovascular problems that accompany it, including:

- Coronary Artery Disease
- Heart Attack
- Stroke
- Kidney Disease
- Neuropathy
- Amputations

### Cardiovascular RISKS



These are all serious health risks that stem from complications with diabetes—and why it is so vital that they keep their blood sugar under control.

### Lifestyle Changes it Requires

The first thing a person with diabetes needs to come to grips with is the definitive lifestyle changes they must make in order to manage it. Many of these changes come in the form of diet choices, requiring them to cut out foods that cause a spike in blood sugar such as sweets, chips and food high in carbohydrates. Daily life will take on a much more disciplined schedule in order to monitor blood sugar levels and ensure that the timing of medication and meals align. Daily exercise, good sleep patterns and low stress are also critical factors that impact blood sugar and must be maintained. Moreover, they must take extra care of their skin and feet to prevent wounds that could lead to serious infections.

These can be difficult changes for your loved one to make, but they will be much more successful if they become family lifestyle changes.

### Partnering with their Physician

Working together with their physician to achieve their diabetic goals is a big part of the process, so it's vital that they keep all of their appointments. During these visits, their physician will review their medication, blood sugar logs and diet to identify how well they are managing their condition and make adjustments as needed. This is the time to openly discuss any barriers that keep them from complying with their prescribed plan of care.

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

## The Important Role Caregivers Play

As a family caregiver, you play a significant part in the success of your loved one's diabetic care. Ultimately, your role is to ensure they follow the plan of care established by their doctor. Depending on the individual, this may mean broad oversight of their care plan and reminders, or it could mean extensive, hands-on involvement to ensure they are following the new protocols required to manage their blood sugar and live a quality life.

As their caregiver, they may be looking to you for assistance with:

<b>Making good food choices, grocery shopping and meal planning</b>
<b>Reminding them to take medications around scheduled meal times</b>
<b>Taking blood sugar levels and documenting them each day</b>
<b>Responding to hyperglycemic and hypoglycemic symptoms</b>
<b>Examining skin and feet for any breaks or wounds</b>
<b>Notifying their doctor of skin issues or wounds</b>
<b>Ensuring they keep all of their doctor appointments</b>
<b>Helping them understand all of the components essential to self-care</b>

## How We Can Help You

Interim HealthCare has been a trusted source of care and support to individuals living with chronic diseases since 1966. This Diabetes Caregiver's Guide is a compilation of insights designed to help you understand their condition so you can provide the care they need to manage it.

When they need additional support at home, our staff can provide the specialized care they require—from medical professionals able to lead them through a proven pathway to successful self-care, to aides who can assist with the activities of everyday living and ensure they stay on track with their diabetic goals. We understand the challenges that diabetes brings, so we are committed to providing the resources and support caregivers need to help their loved one follow their individual plan of care.

# HomeLife

## ENRICHMENT®



MIND



BODY



SPIRIT



FAMILY

### A Holistic Approach to Diabetes Care

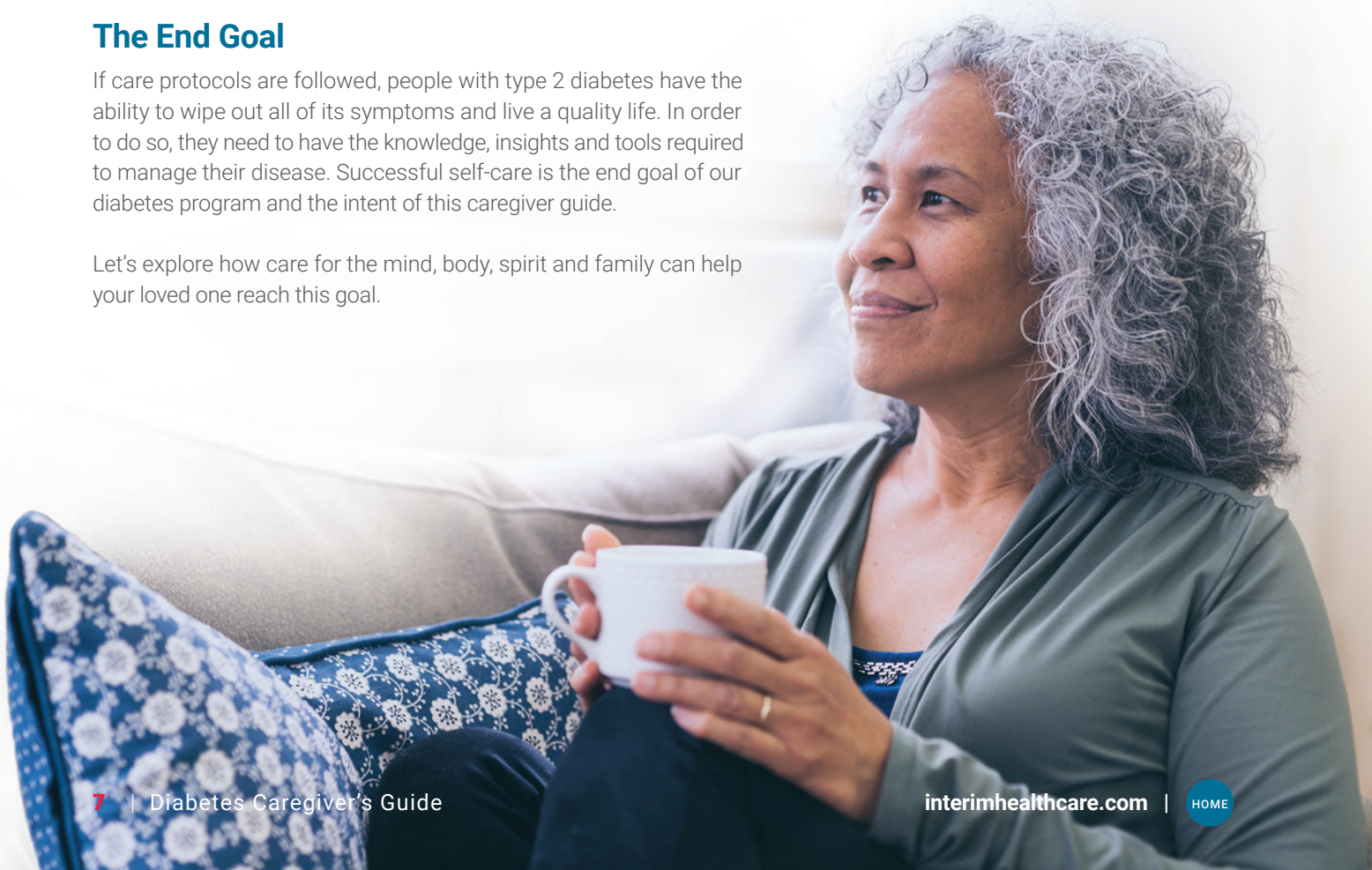
At Interim HealthCare, we believe in care for the whole individual, not just one part—and it is embedded in every aspect of our care model. Our HomeLife Enrichment® (HLE) standard of care thoughtfully engages the mind, body, spirit and family to ensure an optimal care experience.

Our HLE model gives caregivers a holistic view of diabetes care and how interconnected each aspect is to big-picture outcomes. In this guide, we will explore each part of the care process in order to give you a solid understanding of what your loved one needs and how best to care for them.

### The End Goal

If care protocols are followed, people with type 2 diabetes have the ability to wipe out all of its symptoms and live a quality life. In order to do so, they need to have the knowledge, insights and tools required to manage their disease. Successful self-care is the end goal of our diabetes program and the intent of this caregiver guide.

Let's explore how care for the mind, body, spirit and family can help your loved one reach this goal.



## MIND

*Care for the mind involves knowledge, insight and understanding which lead to actions that produce new habits and positively impact outcomes.*

### Understanding Diabetes and its Impact on the Body

In its most basic form, diabetes is a disease that occurs when blood sugar is too high. Since these individuals are not producing enough insulin to transfer the sugar from their food to their cells for energy, it collects in their bloodstream causing all sorts of problems—from heart disease and kidney problems to skin issues such as poor healing, increased wounds, numbness and pain in their extremities related to nerve damage. Moreover, it increases their susceptibility to other serious health conditions. This is why many people end up with multiple chronic diseases and why it's so important that they make the necessary changes now to get their diabetes under control.

### Symptoms that Demand Your Attention

As a caregiver, you need to be keenly aware of symptoms that can result in serious problems for your loved one. When their blood sugar is off-track, signs of hyperglycemia or hypoglycemia will occur—and when they do, you must respond immediately.

### Hypoglycemia

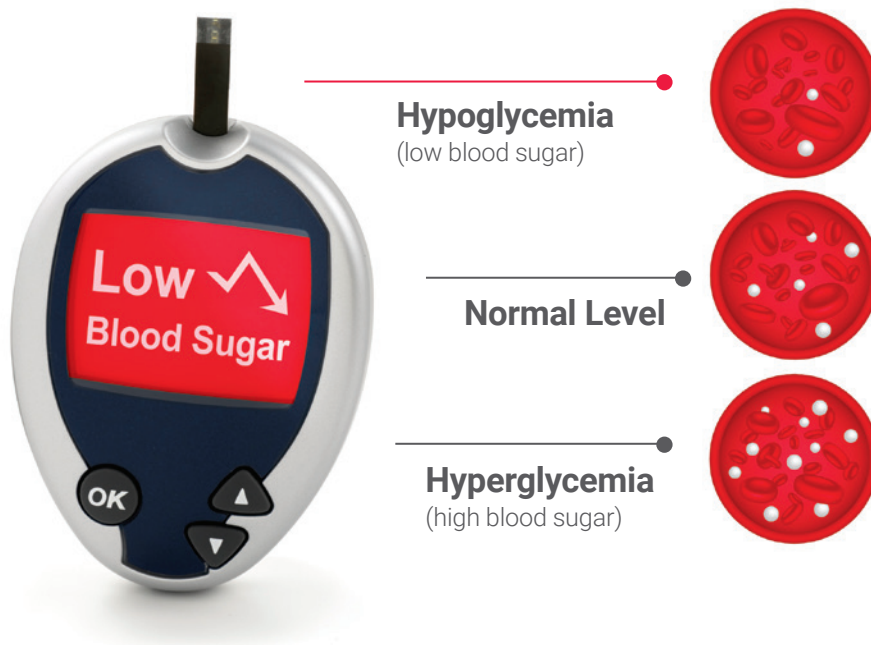
Hypoglycemia means their blood sugar is too low. This is really dangerous because the body needs energy—derived from sugar—to keep the cells alive. If their blood sugar goes too low, it could result in a loss of consciousness and other medical emergencies.

### What Causes Low Blood Sugar?

Often, it is the result of taking their medication or exercising without eating. Since food increases blood sugar and diabetic medication is intended to lower it, skipping a meal will cause it to dip too low. You see, the medication will do its job whether or not the diabetic has eaten, so it is crucial that they stay on schedule with meal times to ensure their blood sugar is regulated. Likewise, exercise also lowers their blood sugar, so if they neglect to eat beforehand, it can also result in a similar hypoglycemic response.

### Symptoms of Hypoglycemia<sup>2</sup>

- Sweating
- Paleness
- Irritability
- Shakiness
- Hunger
- Dizziness
- Poor coordination
- Confusion
- Incoherent speech
- Fatigue



Source: <sup>2</sup>[www.woundcareinc.com](http://www.woundcareinc.com)



### How to Respond to Hypoglycemia:

If you notice these symptoms, you need to get sugar into their body immediately. Always keep something sugary on-hand to help them, such as:

- Hard candy
- Fruit juice
- Soft drink
- Glucose tablets

#### Emergency situation:

*If you ever find your loved one passed out and you are unable to administer something with sugar in it, call 911 immediately.*

### Hyperglycemia

Hyperglycemia means their blood sugar is too high. This is just as serious as hypoglycemia and can result in a loss of consciousness or other medical emergency, if untreated. Over the course of time, hyperglycemia can lead to serious health complications with the heart, kidneys, nerves and eyes.<sup>3</sup>

#### What Causes High Blood Sugar?

This happens when a diabetic eats a high-sugar meal and they neglect to take their medicine to help transfer the sugar from the bloodstream to the cells. One of the most important adjustments people with diabetes must make is to adhere to scheduled medication and meal times in order to prevent spikes and drops in their blood sugar.

#### Symptoms of Hyperglycemia<sup>4</sup>

- Dry mouth
- Increased thirst
- Weakness
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Blurry vision
- Frequent urination

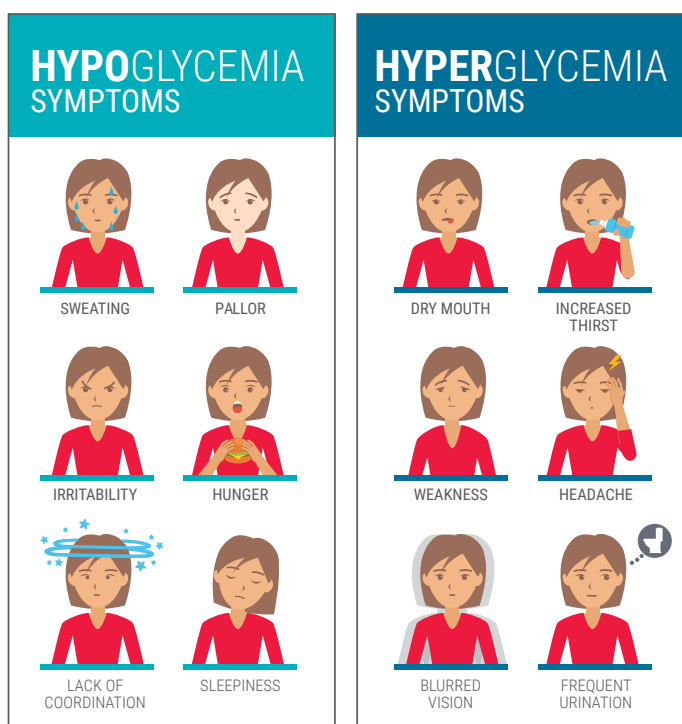
#### How to Respond to Hyperglycemia:

If you notice any of these symptoms, you need to respond immediately to help them lower their blood sugar. There are a few primary ways to do this:

- Medication
- Exercise
- Insulin supplements (if ordered by a physician)

#### Emergency situation:

*If you ever find your loved one passed out and you are unable to administer their medicine, call 911 immediately.*



Source: <sup>3</sup>[www.mayoclinic.org](http://www.mayoclinic.org) <sup>4</sup>[www.woundcareinc.com](http://www.woundcareinc.com)



## Following Prescribed Medications

A crucial part of caring for a diabetic is ensuring they follow their prescribed medication regimen. With type 2 diabetes, the medication has just one role—lower their blood sugar. But, in order to work properly, it must be scheduled around planned meal times.

Here's why this is important: If the diabetic takes their medicine and misses their meal, it will cause their blood sugar to drop too low. And, if they have their meal but skip their medicine, it will cause their blood sugar to soar too high. The two must work together to regulate their blood sugar level. It's important to know the signs of hypoglycemia and hyperglycemia so you can recognize when it's time to take action.

## Monitoring Over-the-Counter Medications

In an effort to control their blood sugar, you must also consider the impact that over-the-counter medications can have on their levels. Many of these medications are loaded with sugar and can cause their blood sugar to spike. Be sure to read the labels before you take over-the-counter products, such as cough or cold medication. Your job, as their caregiver, is to help monitor all sources of sugar that may impact their condition to prevent other health problems.

## Reviewing Medication to Ensure it's Working

When a family member is diagnosed with diabetes, their doctor will prescribe medication to get their blood sugar down to a target level. Getting the medication regimen right is a process that requires total follow-through with their medication, meal plan and blood sugar monitoring. The only way to know if the medicine is achieving the right results is to accurately follow the plan of care and document their blood sugar levels at set times each day.

To assist you, we have included a blood sugar tracking sheet as well as a [medication tracking sheet](#) in the Appendix of this guide, which you can use to log their blood sugar levels and medication each day. During appointments, their physician or home health nurse will review these sheets and make adjustments as needed.

## Monitoring Blood Sugar

Individuals with diabetes need to check their blood sugar on a regular basis. Many physicians would like their patients to check their blood sugar at the following times:

- In the morning (before food/drink)
- After lunch
- After dinner
- Before bed

The first blood sugar check is the most telling. This is your "fasting blood sugar" and a key indicator of how the medication, prescribed diet and exercise plan is working. The normal range for fasting blood sugar is between 80 and 100 mg/dL.

These numbers are important for the physician to review. Blood sugar levels should be documented each day and shared during appointments so the patient and their doctor can evaluate and discuss how well it's working and make changes as needed.

TARGET BLOOD SUGAR LEVELS FOR DIABETES	AGE 20+	
	Fasting	less than <b>100</b>
Before Meal	<b>70-130</b>	
After Meal (1-2 hours)	less than <b>180</b>	
Before Exercise	if taking insulin, at least <b>100</b>	
Bedtime	<b>100-140</b>	
Amounts shown above mg/dL		
A1c	less than or around <b>7.0%</b>	
These are general medical guidelines. Please follow your doctor's instructions.		



***“Individuals with diabetes need to check their blood sugar on a regular basis.”***



### Diabetic Blood Work

Every three months, diabetics should have an A1c blood test done. This test will give their physician an idea of how the blood sugar levels have been responding over the past 90 days. It will also show the physician if the patient is complying with the diet, exercise and medication regimen. The goal of this test is to maintain a number of seven or below, which indicates the patient has achieved good control over their diabetes.

### Using a Glucometer

A glucometer is a device that diabetics use to check their blood sugar levels. Its main function is to determine how much sugar is in the blood. To use it, the diabetic will prick their finger with the lancet (needle) to get a droplet of blood onto a special strip that then processes it inside the instrument and measures the amount of sugar in their blood. It's all part of the prescription they receive from their physician or hospital.

### HbA1c Test Scores

	HbA1c Test Score	Mean Blood mg/dL	Glucose mmol/L
Excellent	4.0	50	2.6
	5.0	80	4.7
	6.0	115	6.3
Good	7.0	150	8.2
	8.0	180	10.0
Poor	9.0	215	11.9
	10.0	250	13.7
	11.0	280	15.6
	12.0	315	17.4
	13.0	350	19.3
	14.0	380	21.1

To ensure proper use of the glucometer, their physician or home health nurse may have them take their blood sugar in front of them to verify they know how to use it correctly. As their caregiver, it is important that you know how to use it as well, in the event they become weak and are unable to do it themselves.

### How Food Affects Blood Sugar

Understanding how different foods affect your loved one's blood sugar is an important part of the care process. This will guide you in what type of food to buy and how to prepare balanced meals that support their diabetic goals. While food is a key component of the way you care for their body, it involves a total mind shift in the way food is viewed and incorporated into their diet. We will delve into the topic of food and nutrition much deeper in the next section of this guide.

### Barriers to Diabetes Care

When a loved one is diagnosed with diabetes, there are a number of lifestyle changes they must make to get their condition under control. It requires discipline and motivation to make those changes, but they are necessary to managing their diabetes and preventing major health risks. Some of the biggest barriers to care are:

- Unwillingness to make required lifestyle changes
- Backsliding and eating high-sugar foods
- Not motivated to exercise daily
- Not taking medication on time

Overcoming these obstacles is essential to their health. As their caregiver, you can be instrumental in helping them tackle the tough challenges and make the changes required to stay on course with their care plan. In some cases, you may find additional support is needed, such as a medical social worker (MSW) to assist with meals and community resources or a physical therapist to help with an exercise program. If so, Interim HealthCare can help you find the skilled resources and support they need to address these barriers to care.

## Documenting their Condition

The most important thing a person with diabetes can do is document their condition for their physician. Typically, they want to see how your body is responding to medication and food.

## Tracking Blood Sugar Levels

In order to get the right medication regimen and ensure it is achieving targeted results, diabetics must document their blood sugar levels on a daily basis. Their doctor may have them check it in the morning, mid-day and at night to gauge how well the medication is working. You can assist your loved one by reminding them to keep a record of their blood sugar levels each day. The numbers tell the real story and their physician will need to see what's happening when they take their medication in order to determine if their diabetes is under control or if adjustments need to be made. We've included a [Blood Sugar Tracker](#) sheet they can use to log their numbers in the Appendix.

This is a habit that must stay ingrained in the diabetic. After an individual is used to the regimen, they may think they don't need to check their blood sugar as often. But, their doctor still needs the numbers to know how their body is responding. Over time, their medication may begin to work less effectively and they may need to switch medication to get the right results. This is why documenting their blood sugar levels daily is so important.

## Tracking Food Intake

In the beginning, the doctor may request your loved one keep a log of the foods they eat each day. This will offer insight into their blood sugar levels and whether or not they are complying with their prescribed diet. It's also a good exercise for the diabetic as they are able to see what foods are increasing their blood sugar and which ones are not. For example, if eating a donut causes the diabetic to experience hyperglycemic symptoms after taking their medication, they must understand, donuts should no longer be a part of their diet. Understanding how food impacts their blood sugar leads to better choices and new habits that enable them to move toward self-care.

## Equipping Individuals for Self-Care

The best thing you can do as a caregiver is to help your loved one along in their journey toward self-care. To do so, they must understand all of the components of diabetes care and how they work together to achieve optimal results—from medication, diet and exercise to taking and documenting blood sugar levels and working closely with their physician to stay on track.





*“One of the most important changes a person with diabetes must make is to their diet.”*

## BODY

*Care for the body involves diet, exercise and sleep as well as care for the skin, feet and other body parts. This is a crucial part of managing diabetes and minimizing other serious health risks associated with it.*

### Following the Prescribed Diet

One of the most important changes a person with diabetes must make is to their diet. This is often the most difficult part of the care regimen, since type 2 diabetes is typically caused by poor eating habits. Unlike some health conditions, diet changes are not optional for the diabetic. If they choose to ignore this component of care, there are serious consequences to their health. In addition to hyperglycemia and hypoglycemia, it can lead to life-threatening cardiovascular problems.

When diagnosed with diabetes, their doctor will order a dietician consult to review what your loved one was eating and determine where changes need to be made. From there, they will typically be put on a special diet ordered by calorie count, such as 1200 or 1600 calories a day. Or, it could be more like a Weight Watcher's diet with a protein, vegetable, carbohydrate and fruit. It just depends on what their doctor prescribes. The goal is to move them to a healthy diet while teaching them about food portions and the effect that carbs have on their blood sugar. While difficult, this is a lifestyle change that must take place in order to get their diabetes under control.

### Planning Meals that Meet Diabetic Goals

The key to eating right is planning ahead. For a diabetic, the best approach is to create a weekly meal plan before you do their grocery shopping. Consider what your loved one will want for snacks. While high-sugar foods are out, fresh fruit can be a great option. If they love cookies and crackers, their dietician might suggest graham crackers with some peanut butter, a smarter carb choice that adds protein along with the sugar. Planning out snacks ahead of time will help them stick to their diet.

Another consideration to plan for are the types of vegetables you will incorporate into their meals. Since veggies are now a primary part of their diet, it's important to think through their weekly menu so fresh items don't perish before they are consumed. If budget permits, fresh vegetables are best, but frozen vegetables are a decent substitute. While canned vegetables are also an option, the sodium level is much higher, which is not ideal for a diabetic if fresh or frozen choices are affordable.

For additional resources on meal planning and foods that are good for a diabetic, see the [sample shopping list](#) in the Appendix.

### Meal Times

Establishing a set time for daily meals is important to be sure it aligns with their medication schedule. Keep in mind, your loved one should not eat too close to bedtime, since blood sugar is at its highest about two or three hours after a meal. By planning out their meal times, you can alleviate this concern and ensure their blood sugar is back to normal before going to bed.



***“Daily exercise has numerous benefits that will help diabetics manage their disease.”***



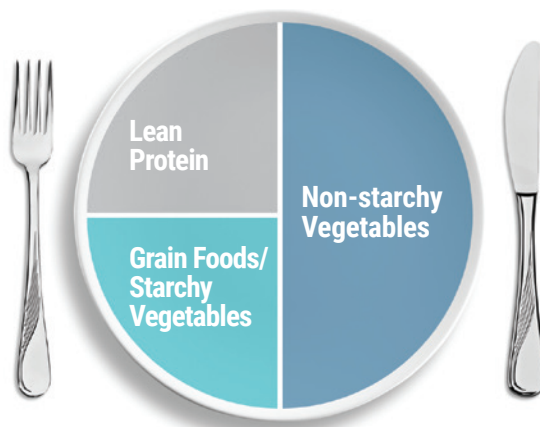




BODY

## The Plate Method

As you plan out their meals, the Diabetes Plate Method is a helpful guide to the types of food and portions they should be eating. Essentially, half of their plate should be comprised of non-starchy vegetables, one-quarter of their plate with whole grains or starchy vegetables and one-quarter with a lean protein. As their prescribed diet permits, it can also include fruit and low-fat dairy foods on the side. The plate method is a simple, visual way to ensure your loved one is eating the right foods in the right portions to strengthen their body and manage their diabetes.



## Simple vs. Complex Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are the body's main source of energy, fueling the nervous system and supplying energy to the muscles. There are two kinds of carbs: simple and complex. The simple carbs are the bad carbs. These are sugary, fat foods with no nutritional value such as donuts, chips and cookies. Diabetics should stay away from simple carbs as they cause their blood sugar to spike upward and drop quickly, resulting in symptoms of hypoglycemia or hyperglycemia. The complex carbs are the good carbs. These are nutritious foods like beans, grains, lentils and peanuts. Complex carbs turn into sugar slowly, enabling the diabetic to maintain a stable blood sugar. Based on the plate method, complex carbs should only account for one-fourth of a diabetic's meal.

## Smoking Risks

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), smokers are 30 to 40 percent more likely to develop type 2 diabetes than non-smokers.<sup>5</sup> If this was a contributing factor in your loved one's diagnosis, it's crucial that they quit. As a diabetic, smoking is simply not an option. If they choose to continue smoking, they will have trouble with insulin dosing and will not be able to manage their condition. That's not all. The risks to their health are serious, ranging from heart and kidney disease, poor blood flow in the legs and feet to infections, ulcers, amputations, retinopathy and peripheral neuropathy.

## Daily Exercise

Exercise is essential for a person with diabetes. More than just a healthy habit, daily exercise has numerous benefits that will help them manage their disease:

- Strengthens their body
- Increases heart health
- Reduces excess weight
- Lowers blood sugar

While exercise does not need to be excessive, it should be a part of their daily routine. Some simple forms of exercise include: walking, cycling, stretching, yoga, swimming and water aerobics. However they choose to move, it will have a positive impact on their diabetes. And, as their caregiver, you can exercise right along with them to make it more motivating and enjoyable.

Plan for exercise at specific times. Since movement helps lower their blood sugar, it's best to exercise about two hours after they eat, when their blood sugar is the highest. This is a great way to regulate their blood sugar and boost energy.

Source: <sup>5</sup> [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

*“Their doctor may prescribe additional therapies to help manage their disease.”*





## Sleep

For the diabetic, sleep is equally as important as diet and exercise. If your loved one does not get enough sleep, it will increase their blood sugar and cause insulin resistance. Sleep allows their body to heal and repair. If you notice they are not getting enough sleep at night, schedule time for naps during the day. By encouraging consistent sleep times, you can help them combat these issues and strengthen their body.

## Prescribed Therapies

When your loved one is diagnosed with diabetes, their doctor may prescribe additional therapies to help them manage their disease. As a caregiver, these resources can be a significant support to you as you learn how to help your loved one with daily care. These therapies may include:

<b>Physical Therapy</b>	Assisting them with exercises, strengthening and endurance
<b>Occupational Therapy</b>	Helping them with self-care and activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing and cooking
<b>Medical Social Worker (MSW)</b>	Addressing needs such as finances, meals or depression and connecting them to community resources that can help

## Skin and Foot Care

Care for the skin and feet is a big one for the diabetic—and the consequences of non-compliance are scary. Due to neuropathy, a person with diabetes may have numbness on the bottom of their feet and not be able to feel a cut or broken area of their skin. This can lead to a wound quickly and pose real danger to the diabetic. Here's why: Due to hyperglycemia and impaired circulation, wounds don't heal very easily. This often leads to an infection which can quickly move to the bone and require an amputation. And, it's more common than you may think. Diabetic amputations occur more than any other kind of non-traumatic amputations in the U.S. This is strong motivation to take skin and foot care seriously.

### Guidelines for Skin and Foot Care:

- Keep their skin and feet well-protected
- Make sure they always wear shoes
- Ensure shoes fit properly to avoid blisters and sores
- Moisturize skin and feet daily to avoid breaks and cracks in their skin
- Examine the bottom of their feet daily and between toes for cracks
- Notify their doctor immediately if breaks or sores appear

## Wound Care

If a cut, blister or crack appears on your loved one's skin or feet, you should contact their doctor or home health nurse right away so they can assess the area and begin wound care. No matter how minor it may seem, it could turn into something much more serious within a matter of hours or days. As their caregiver, it's important to examine their skin and feet daily for issues that could result in a wound to prevent greater problems.

***“It is important to have regular eye exams to ensure there are no issues developing due to their disease.”***





### Maintaining a Healthy Body Weight

For a diabetic, the ability to maintain a healthy body weight goes hand in hand with managing their blood sugar. Think of it this way: obesity is the outward sign of poor eating habits and high blood sugar (or hyperglycemia) is the inward sign. When your loved one is following their prescribed diet, it will cause their blood sugar to fall into a normal range, resulting in weight loss and reduced stress on their heart and joints. So, when they are able to maintain a good weight, it's an indication that they are complying with their diet and learning the disciplines required to manage their diabetes and move to self-care.

### Dental Care

Good dental care is crucial for people with diabetes. The increased blood sugar in their system has an acidic effect on their gums and teeth, putting them at higher risk for tooth decay, gingivitis (early gum disease) and periodontitis (advanced gum disease). Since diabetes reduces their ability to fight bacteria, it's important to keep this in check. The biggest thing your loved one can do to prevent dental problems is to get their blood sugar under control. As their caregiver, you can help by encouraging them to brush their teeth and floss daily, and making sure they visit their dentist regularly.

### Eye Care

People with diabetes have an increased risk of eye problems. For this reason, it is important to have regular eye exams to ensure no issues are developing due to their disease. Since diabetes can affect vision and ultimately cause blindness in some, it is important to report any changes to their doctor and have their eyes examined each year.

### Caring for the Body, Controlling Diabetes

Care for the body is a critical success factor in a diabetic's ability to manage their disease. While it may be the toughest part of the process, it has the greatest impact on their health. As your loved one begins to acclimate to new foods, schedules and care regimens, they will begin to see their blood sugar levels drop and start to regulate. This is very exciting and well worth the effort it takes to make the change.

To recap, caring for their body involves:

<b>Following the prescribed diet</b>	<b>Caring for skin and feet</b>
<b>Not smoking</b>	<b>Receiving timely wound care</b>
<b>Exercising regularly</b>	<b>Maintaining a healthy weight</b>
<b>Sleeping regularly</b>	<b>Caring for teeth and gums</b>
<b>Getting prescribed therapies</b>	<b>Having an eye exam annually</b>

As their caregiver, you can be very instrumental in helping them overcome barriers to good body care and find the support they need to successfully manage their diabetes.

***“It’s not uncommon for a person with diabetes to experience stress and anxiety over their diagnosis, which can lead to depression.”***





## SPIRIT

*Care for a person's spirit is the most compassionate form of care there is. It uplifts their heart, offers support for their emotions and inspires joy amid their health challenges.*

### Caring for their Emotions

When a loved one is diagnosed with diabetes, it can be very emotional. It's no longer a good idea or even a strong suggestion to make a lifestyle change—it's absolutely essential if they want to live a quality life. For the diabetic, this can be extremely difficult. For many, it was their poor eating habits and lack of exercise that led them to develop the disease. Now, they have to make a complete U-turn and head in another direction to overcome it. This requires commitment, with very little room for backsliding. While it may seem like an uphill battle, your encouragement and support will enable them to make the hard changes.

### It's a Marathon, Not a Sprint

A good way to approach these changes is to take it in stride, making gradual changes and building on them until they reach their health goals. If you have a home care provider, they can help your loved one make changes that are not so painful, such as offering substitutions for foods they love or short periods of exercise that increase over time. The hardest part is getting started, but when they start to feel the effects of these changes—weight loss, energy and just feeling better—it will serve as motivation to keep going. The important thing is to pace themselves and stay the course.

### Recognizing Signs of Depression

It's not uncommon for a person with diabetes to experience stress and anxiety over their diagnosis, which can lead to depression. It really is a lot to take in, not to mention, all the potential things that could go wrong if they don't get their blood sugar under control. For this reason, it's important for caregivers to recognize the signs of depression so they can come alongside them with support and encouragement. Symptoms of depression vary from person to person, but may include:

<b>Trouble concentrating</b>	<b>Insomnia or sleeping too much</b>
<b>Unable to remember details</b>	<b>Irritability</b>
<b>Difficulty making decisions</b>	<b>Loss of interest in things</b>
<b>Fatigue</b>	<b>Overeating</b>
<b>Feelings of guilt</b>	<b>Lack of appetite</b>
<b>Worthlessness</b>	<b>Aches and pains that remain</b>
<b>Helplessness</b>	<b>Feeling sad and empty</b>
<b>Pessimism</b>	<b>Suicidal thoughts</b>



We recommend you talk to your loved one about the potential for depression and how to combat it. It's good for them to know, these feelings are normal for a person diagnosed with diabetes and they are not alone. As their caregiver, it's important to discuss these things openly and ask them if they are experiencing any of these symptoms. While they might deny it to another person, typically family members will pick up on changes in behavior right away. If you do, talk to them about it and don't be afraid to ask the hard questions to ensure their safety and well-being.

Since depression can lead to thoughts of harming oneself or suicide, you don't want to hope they are not going there mentally—you need to know. If the idea has entered their mind, oftentimes, they will admit it. So, it's really helpful for them to know, this is normal and what they need now is support. Then, proceed with getting qualified clinical therapy to help them. If you are concerned that they will hurt themselves, consult their doctor right away and make a plan for them to receive counseling.

### Engage in Activities that Encourage Joy

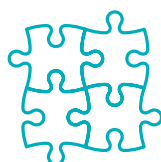
A diagnosis of diabetes can be very discouraging for your loved one. As stress and worry rise, it's important to de-escalate anxiety and shift their focus to more positive things.

One simple way you can help is to lead them in some breathing exercises, encouraging them to take big, deep breaths. This has a calming effect that will help reduce stress and bring immediate relief.

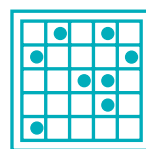
Another great way to diffuse stress and anxiety is to engage in activities that uplift their spirit and add joy to each day. At Interim, this is an integral part of our HomeLife Enrichment® model of care. The reality is, diabetes impacts much more than just their body—it affects their mind, their spirit and their family as well. If they are down and out on life, the road to better health will be an uphill battle. As their caregiver, you can help make life a little bit easier. Think about the activities that bring them peace and happiness, and be intentional about incorporating them into their day. Here are some ideas:



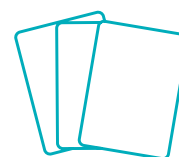
**Arts and crafts**



**Puzzles**



**Board games**



**Card games**



**Memory recollection**



**Virtual tours**  
(destinations, museums, zoos, art galleries)



**Music and virtual concerts**



**Writing letters**



## FAMILY

*Care for the family involves educating, guiding and supporting those caring for a loved one with diabetes. It fosters understanding, improves overall outcomes and encourages self-care.*

### Family Plays a Key Role in the Care Process

As a caregiver, you play an important part in helping your loved one navigate the challenges of diabetes while learning how to manage their condition effectively. If you understand what causes diabetes, how to recognize its symptoms and how to respond, you'll be a second layer of support to them as they learn the essentials of self-care.

At Interim HealthCare, we're here to support you by providing the resources, tools and advice you need to be the informed and compassionate caregiver they need. We firmly believe, engaging family in the care process is the key to helping individuals gain control of their health and live a quality life.

### Knowledge and Training Leads to Better Outcomes

As you learn the basics of diabetes care, you'll gain the understanding and confidence required to care for your loved one in practical ways. You'll also be a source of accountability and encouragement as they learn the regimens of diabetes care and adapt to a new normal.

As their caregiver, here are some important aspects of care you should become familiar with:

- Understanding diabetes and how it affects the body
- Recognizing symptoms of high and low blood sugar
- Responding to hyperglycemia and hypoglycemia
- Using a glucometer
- Checking and documenting blood sugar regularly
- Learning how diet and nutrition affect their health
- Knowing how daily exercise impacts blood sugar
- Following the prescribed medication regimen
- Understanding how meals and medication work together
- Partnering with their doctor to manage their condition

### Self-Care is the Ultimate Goal

Diabetes is not the end of good health for your loved one. If they make the necessary changes to get their blood sugar under control, they can go on to live a quality life. That's the goal and self-care is the way to get there. As their caregiver, you can support them in this effort and walk alongside them in their journey to good health. And, this caregiver guide will give you the insights you need to do it.



## Diabetes Doesn't Mean They Can't Live a Quality Life ... It Just Looks a Little Different.

When a family member is diagnosed with diabetes, it can feel overwhelming. What does it mean? How can they get it under control? How will it change the way they live—and the way you care for them?

An expert in diabetes care, Interim HealthCare can help answer these questions and provide the practical support you need to be the informed caregiver they need. Since 1966, we've been helping individuals with diabetes learn how to manage their condition so they can live a quality life.

Our HomeLife Enrichment® standard of care is the cornerstone of Interim's Diabetes Program, and what makes it so successful. Focused on the whole individual, we engage the mind, body, spirit and family to ensure every aspect of care is tailored to their unique needs.

As a caregiver, you play a vital role in your loved one's ability to gain control of their health. As such, we are here to support you by providing the resources, tools and advice you need to help them manage their condition and achieve their health goals.

If you would like to learn more about our Diabetes program, reach out to one of our offices and let us know how we can help you. To find an office near you, visit our website at [www.interimhealthcare.com](http://www.interimhealthcare.com).



## Diabetes Do's and Don'ts

DO	DON'T
Take medication as prescribed by your physician	Skip medication or try to catch up on doses
Plan some sort of exercise or movement every day	Exercise excessively without planning
Plan meals using the Plate Method	Overeat carbohydrates like potatoes, rice, chips and cookies
Make a shopping list before you go to the store	Fall victim to emotional or binge eating
Check and record your blood sugars every day and share them with your physician	Skip checking blood sugars for any reason
Check the top and bottom of your feet every day; Report any signs of redness or broken skin to your physician	Neglect hygiene, especially skin and foot care
Check between your toes and report any signs of redness or cracked skin to your physician	Delay telling your doctor if skin issues appear
Check skin and moisturize any dry areas	Ignore redness or sore places on the skin
Keep your scheduled physician appointments and take all of your information with you, including: blood sugar log, medication tracker, diet plan, exercise plan, etc.	Delay contacting your physician if you notice changes in your blood sugar numbers
Have an eye exam annually	Neglect good eye care
Stay hydrated and drink plenty of water	Go long periods of time without hydrating
Know your A1C number	Forget to schedule an A1C blood test every three months
Report changes in vision	Ignore any changes in vision
Report new pain or tingling in hands or feet	Disregard new symptoms or neglect to report them
Get plenty of sleep	Underestimate the importance of getting good rest
Go to the dentist twice a year	Neglect your mouth or teeth
Have a complete foot exam annually	Take foot care lightly or neglect annual exams
Have a yearly flu shot	Hold off on refilling prescriptions for your diabetic medication
Have a pneumonia shot	Ignore health-related issues that should be reported to your physician

## Blood Sugar Tracker

Week of: ____/____/____	SUNDAY		MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY	
	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar
<b>Fasting</b>														
<b>Breakfast</b>														
<b>Lunch</b>														
<b>Dinner</b>														
<b>Bedtime</b>														

Week of: ____/____/____	SUNDAY		MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY	
	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar
<b>Fasting</b>														
<b>Breakfast</b>														
<b>Lunch</b>														
<b>Dinner</b>														
<b>Bedtime</b>														

Week of: ____/____/____	SUNDAY		MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY	
	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar
<b>Fasting</b>														
<b>Breakfast</b>														
<b>Lunch</b>														
<b>Dinner</b>														
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	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar
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	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar	Time	Blood Sugar
<b>Fasting</b>														
<b>Breakfast</b>														
<b>Lunch</b>														
<b>Dinner</b>														
<b>Bedtime</b>														

## Weekly Diabetes Medication Tracker

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**MONDAY**

MEDICATION	DOSAGE	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER

**TUESDAY**

MEDICATION	DOSAGE	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER

**WEDNESDAY**

MEDICATION	DOSAGE	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER

**THURSDAY**

MEDICATION	DOSAGE	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER

**FRIDAY**

MEDICATION	DOSAGE	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER

**SATURDAY**

MEDICATION	DOSAGE	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER

**SUNDAY**

MEDICATION	DOSAGE	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER

## Sample Shopping List for Diabetics

### Vegetables:

Peppers (all colors)  
Carrots  
Brussel sprouts  
Cauliflower  
Salad (mixed lettuce)  
Green beans  
Celery  
Broccoli  
Parsnips  
Spaghetti squash  
Cauliflower rice (rice substitute)  
Zucchini pasta (pasta substitute)

### Fruits:

Apples  
Blueberries  
Strawberries  
Raspberries  
Peaches  
Apricots  
Pears  
Kiwi

### Proteins:

Chicken breasts  
Hamburger  
White fish  
*\*Proteins should be grilled or  
baked, not fried*

### Grains:

Wheat bread  
Quinoa  
Wild rice  
Whole grain barley  
Whole rye  
Whole oats/oatmeal

### Snacks:

Graham crackers & peanut butter  
Greek yogurt & berries  
Hard-boiled eggs  
Veggies & hummus  
Avocado  
Almonds  
Cottage cheese







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Founded in 1966, Interim HealthCare is the nation's first home care and healthcare staffing company. A recognized leader in their industry, Interim understands the importance of providing quality care in a place that's ideal for the individuals they serve. Distinguished by their HomeLife Enrichment® signature standard of care, they engage the mind, body, spirit and family in a personalized plan of care that ensures an optimal experience for their clients.

Operating through a network of more than 300 locally owned franchises, Interim offers a comprehensive range of home care, hospice and healthcare staffing solutions. From skilled nurses and therapists to aides and companions, they provide an average of 25 million hours of home care to 190,000 people every year.

**[interimhealthcare.com](https://www.interimhealthcare.com)**