

Control your diabetes *For Life:*

Circular 569 C

Healthy Living with Diabetes

By taking an active role in controlling your diabetes, you will:

- feel better
- have more energy
- prevent diabetes complications
- live longer

Taking control of your diabetes involves:

- eating a healthy diet
- regular physical activity
- taking medications as prescribed by your health care provider
- checking your blood glucose
- taking care of your skin and feet

What are the benefits of choosing to live a healthy life with diabetes? Feeling better and having more energy are short-term benefits. Living longer and preventing diabetes complications are long-term benefits. People who have diabetes can live healthy lives when they take on the day-to-day responsibilities of their own **diabetes self-care**.

Essentials of Diabetes Self-Care

Diabetes self-care is what people with diabetes do day-to-day to control blood glucose and prevent diabetes complications. The five basic elements of diabetes self-care are **diet, exercise, medications, monitoring, and skin/foot care**. As with any habit, such as brushing your teeth after every meal, these diabetes self-care habits will help you maintain good health when done regularly.

Diet: Choosing a **balanced diet, which is low in fat and high in fiber**, helps control blood glucose and provides all the nutrients your body needs to stay healthy. People with diabetes must pay special attention to the amount of fats and carbohydrates (the body's primary sources of energy) in their diet. See your dietitian for a meal pattern that fits your lifestyle and eating habits.

Exercise: **Daily physical activity** helps control weight and blood glucose, and reduces your risks for other chronic diseases like heart disease. The ef-



College of Agriculture
and Home Economics
Cooperative Extension Service

Raylene McCalman, MS, RD, LD, CDE
Extension Diabetes Coordinator

Martha Archuleta, PhD, RD
Extension Food and Nutrition Specialist

fects of physical activity add up. Several short periods of physical activity done at various times throughout the day can be just as beneficial as one longer period of activity.

Monitoring: Monitoring blood glucose is an essential tool for controlling diabetes. Just like a car speedometer tells how fast or slow you are traveling, knowing your blood glucose levels tells where you are with your diabetes control. Day-to-day blood glucose control is monitored by the use of a **glucose meter**. Monitoring helps you make decisions about food choices, exercise, medications, and stress. Long-term blood glucose control is measured by a test done by your health care provider with a test called **hemoglobin A1c**.

Medications: Many people with diabetes need to take medications to control blood glucose. Medications should be taken **daily as prescribed** by your health care provider. Changes in diet, physical activity level, or blood glucose control may require changes in your medications. Visit your health care provider often, especially if you have any changes in your lifestyle or blood glucose control.

Skin/foot care: Diabetes causes changes in nerves and blood circulation, particularly in the lower legs. Amputations, a major diabetes complication, can be prevented. **Daily foot care** should include looking for sores or cuts, wearing comfortable shoes and socks, and taking care of your skin to prevent blisters, calluses, and cracks.

Other things you can do to stay healthy:

- Don't smoke.
- Learn how to manage stress.
- Learn more about diabetes and diabetes self-care.
- Learn about diabetes resources in your community.
- Get support from friends, family or support groups.
- See your dentist twice a year. Tell your dentist you have diabetes.

Where to Go for More Information

■ Your health care provider

■ American Diabetes Association:
1-800-DIABETES

■ National Diabetes Education Program:
1-800-438-5383 or visit the World Wide Web at **ndep.nih.gov** or **www.cdc.gov**

■ Your county Extension office

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