15 Healthy Tips for Living With Diabetes

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15 Things You Can Do to Stay Healthy While Living With Diabetes

Since the condition affects your entire body, living with diabetes requires more than eating well and keeping your blood sugar within a healthy range.

By implementing and maintaining a healthy lifestyle you will feel better, prevent complications of diabetes, improve your level of wellness, and enhance your likelihood of living a long life.

Let’s take a look at some of the most important lifestyle activities you can implement.

1. Control Your Blood Sugar Levels

Taking steps to control your blood sugar levels is the most important thing that you can do to live well with diabetes. Here are some ways that you can maintain healthy blood sugar levels:

- Follow a healthy diet.
- Exercise daily.
- Take medication if ordered.
- Monitor your blood sugar levels.
- You may need to check your blood sugar several times each day, especially if you need coverage with short-acting types of insulin.

2. Have a Plan for Sick Days

Minor illnesses such as colds and gastrointestinal illnesses may cause your blood sugar level to rise. It is important you plan ahead for sick days.

Ask your health care provider to recommend over-the-counter remedies that are safe for you to use should minor illnesses occur. Some over-the-counter remedies interact with diabetes medications; others contain sugar. Read product labels carefully.

Take a multivitamin/multimineral supplement daily to help prevent minor illnesses from occurring. Extra vitamin C can be helpful for fighting infections.

3. Take Care of Your Eyes

See an ophthalmologist annually. Changes in your eyes can be identified by your eye doctor prior to symptoms being apparent to you. Early identification and treatment of eye disease can preserve your vision.

4. Maintain a Healthy Blood Pressure

Keeping your blood pressure and blood sugar within normal limits helps to preserve the health of your eyes, heart, brain, and kidneys. You have a higher than normal risk of developing hypertension if you are diabetic.

5. Don’t Smoke

While smoking harms everyone, it is especially dangerous for you if you have diabetes. Smoking increases blood pressure, harms your blood vessels, and impairs your ability to heal from infections.

Smoking destroys health-promoting vitamin C and damages the circulation throughout your entire body. Your kidneys, eyes, heart, and extremities are particularly at risk if you have diabetes and smoke.

6. Take Care of Your Feet

Check your feet every day. Call your health care provider if you sustain an injury or notice a change in your feet or nails. Carefully dry between your toes after bathing.

You are more prone to infections of the nails than other people. If you notice discoloration, flaking or other nail problems, get medical attention promptly. Wear clean socks daily. Invest in high quality, properly-fitted shoes. You may be eligible for shoes to be paid for if they are medically necessary. See a podiatrist regularly if you have foot or nail problems.

7. Take Care of Your Kidneys

Drink plenty of water each day. Avoid sugary drinks or beverages containing artificial sweeteners. Take steps to avoid contracting bladder infections.

Wear clean well-ventilated underwear daily. Clean yourself carefully after each time you go to the bathroom.

If you are prone to bladder infections, consider taking cranberry tablets or eating raw blueberries each day, as both fruits help to prevent infection. Have kidney tests done according to the schedule recommended by your health care provider.

8. Don't Be an Ostrich

Stop avoiding the messages from your healthcare team asking you to come in for your Hba1C (long-term blood glucose check), your eye checks and your foot care appointments.

Face the music — things might not be as bad as you think, even after the excesses of the festive season and the specialists will help you get back on track if you’ve lost your way.

Next page: Seven more healthy tips for living with diabetes.

9. Take Advice and Act on It

No one likes to be scolded for a less than perfect diet, exercise plan or general lifestyle, but the experts really do have your wellbeing at heart. The only person who can really help you is you.

Take charge of your health, then you can take pride in your achievements, whether that’s weight-loss, fitness or an overall improved blood glucose level.

10. Knowledge Is Power

Diabetes is a serious condition that can lead to significant health issues or even an early death. Yes it's frightening, but face your fears and find out about your condition.

There are lots of healthcare resources like this website where you can find out about the condition, what complications can occur and how to limit or even prevent complications. Or speak to your doctor about specific symptoms that have been worrying you.

11. Work as Part of a Team

Successful management of diabetes can involve a multi-disciplinary approach. When you are first diagnosed this can seem daunting.

You might be asked to see a dietician, podiatrist, eye specialists, a diabetes nurse and even maybe a clinical psychologist. These experts may be based together in hospitals or clinics, or you might have to travel to each one separately.

See yourself as a member of that team and work with the experts to achieve the best results.

12. You Are What You Eat

This is particularly true when you have diabetes. Every mouthful counts.

Thankfully the old regime of denying all treats and the need to purchase specialist "diabetic" foods has been proved to be unnecessary. Although stores still stock foods labelled "diabetic" there is no need to pay inflated prices.

Many people actually believe the sugar substitutes they contain carry their own health risks.

Just spread less jelly on your toast, or only have it occasionally. Enjoy regular candy — but not every night in front of the TV while washing it down with gallons of sugary soda!

General advice nowadays is the same for diabetics as it is for the rest of the population: eat a healthy, balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables – which goes for staying in and eating out with diabetes.

13. Beware of Miracle Cures

There has been a lot of talk in the media about low-carb diets, extremely low-calorie diets, dietary supplements and other products that claim to cure diabetes.

While it's true that some people with pre-diabetes or borderline diabetes can reverse the trend towards full-blown type 2 diabetes with lifestyle and dietary changes, mostly the best you can aim for is long-term blood glucose readings as near to the normal range as possible.

This is best achieved by following the advice in point five with the help of your diabetes management team. I am going to go out on a limb and state here and now that I am certain that popping a pill that claims to have 30 types of vegetables stuffed in it will not cure your diabetes (although the healthy eating plan these companies suggest might go some way to lowering your HBa1C if you previously existed on burgers and fries).

14. Run, Fat Boy, Run

This is the title of one of my favorite British movies, not an insult to my readers. In the movie, slacker Dennis (played by Simon Pegg) takes up running in a bid to prove to himself, his friends and his ex-fiancée that he is not just a waste of a good skin.

In good movie fashion, he beats all expectations and (spoiler alert!) wins back the girl. So what's my point here?

Simply that everyone can make improvements to their fitness. Total couch potato? Take the steps at the mall instead of the elevator. Get off the bus one stop earlier than you need and walk the extra distance.

15. Share the Secret

Many people feel embarrassed about being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. With the media often perpetuating the notion that it's a disease affecting fat lazy people who deserve their fate, it's understandable why you might not want to share your diagnosis, especially if you are carrying a few extra pounds.

Instead of treating it like a dirty secret, use your position to educate those around you. It will also mean you don't have to wince when your friend offers their beautiful frosted homemade cake — you can compliment her on it and ask for just a tiny taste instead of the giant slab you are being handed.

So there we have it — some simple steps to successful management of your diabetes**.** They might seem small changes, but if you make them you might enjoy a healthier, happier you.