I’ve Just Been Diagnosed With Type 2 Diabetes. Now What?

by REBECCA PACIOREK

Next Steps In Navigating Your Way With a Type 2 Diabetes Diagnosis

"Type 2 diabetes, wow", I thought. "This totally bites".

There’s no good time to find out you have a chronic illness but this really was poor timing for me. That morning, 8 years ago, I had just signed up my mom for in-home hospice care for end-stage colon cancer. And, it was my 39th birthday. Happy birthday to me! I had been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

Now what? Looking back on that horrible time in my life, I don’t know how I managed to take care of myself and my mom but I did what I had to do and can look back now knowing I did OK. Since then, I’ve heard many people ask that same question. "Now what?"

I’ve put together some steps to get you started on the right track with your type 2 diabetes diagnosis, and also to try and help keep that feeling of foreboding and overwhelm at bay.

Take a Deep Breath and Step Back and Relax for a Moment

While the initial reaction can be overwhelming and scary, it’s important to keep in mind that much of what happens from here will depend on what you do with this new information. Getting type 2 diabetes didn’t happen overnight and getting control of it won’t either. So, step back, breathe, and gather all your thoughts.

Get a Binder, Notebook, Folder, or System in Place for Gathering Information

Treat your diabetes like a class in school. Getting organized and getting informed is what will get you the highest grade in a life with diabetes. Having this information together and handy will also be important for those around you in case they need to access it.

Call Your Insurance Company and See What Support They Offer

Many insurances will pay for educational classes, offer an online educational program, and/or set you up with a nurse or contact person to help you. Take advantage of these programs. You probably pay a lot for your health insurance and this is what it’s for. If you don’t have insurance or your insurance company doesn’t offer any assistance, check out the American Diabetes Association’s free Living With Type 2 Diabetes program. It’s specifically designed for the newly diagnosed and full of great information.

Gather Your Personal Support Team

Yes, your family doctor will play a role. But you may also have an endocrinologist, a dietitian, a nurse practitioner, your pharmacist, a personal trainer, a counselor, or any other number of people to help you stay on top of your

sugar counts. Your personal support team also needs to include your cheerleaders. This can be your spouse, children, parents, best friends— those close to you that want you to succeed.

Keep a List of Questions in Your Notebook

There's a lot of information you will be receiving over the next few weeks and what is good for one person may be different for another. By writing down questions as you have them, you are sure not to forget anything and can then just take that list with you when you see the doctors.

Evaluate Your Current Physical Fitness Level and Start Making Improvements

Exercise is a fantastic way to keep your blood sugars down. If you have not been exercising, be sure to talk with your doctor about what they suggest. I started out by just doing the free Leslie Sansone walking videos on YouTube every day. I have then tried various other things just to see what I might like. I also got a Fitbit and track my steps. While I'm nowhere near 10,000 steps a day with a desk job, I have moved my goals up little by little to get closer to that number. And, it's fun to compete with my friends and myself.

Have Written Plans and Goals

Be sure to have a list of how many carbs you should have for each meal, what your sugars should be before and after eating, and what your sugars should be when you wake up in the morning. Also be sure to write down how often your doctor wants you to test your sugars. There are many free charts and graphs online to help you track this information as well as several apps you can get for your phone as well.

Have an Emergency Plan in Place

While most people think of diabetes as only a "high sugar" problem, you can also have your sugars drop and cause hypoglycemia. Be sure to ask your doctor what you should do if your sugars are "too high" and have them define "too high." Also, ask what to do if your sugars drop "too low" and have them define "too low." In addition, be sure to know what to do if you get sick. Write this information down and be certain the people you live with know where to find this information as well as your doctor's phone number.

Have a Party Plan in Place

You will be, most likely, getting used to a new way of eating and exercising. Life will go on, holidays will still happen, and you will still find yourself in plenty of situations that will present tables full of carb-filled food options in front of you. Have a plan of attack for what to eat with diabetes in these moments.

Be Thankful

Be thankful that you know what is going on in your body and that you now have a plan of attack. Be grateful that diabetes is not a terminal illness and that you have a lot of control over what happens to you from here. Be appreciative of your support team and all the help you have available.

We are glad you are a part of our type 2 diabetes community here at *NewLifeOutlook*. By following us here, you are taking some of the important steps needed to learn more about your type 2 diabetes diagnosis and what you can do to manage it. You are also now part of a caring community of people that are just like you. We have faith in you!