Great changes may not happen right away, but with effort even the difficult may become easy.

—Bill Blackman
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what’s in THIS GUIDE

This guide will help you manage your diabetes and lead an active and healthy life.

If you or someone in your family has diabetes, this booklet is for you! It is provided as part of the MaineHealth Target Diabetes Program. It has information about diabetes and tips on how to work with your health care provider to manage your diabetes. We invite you to share this booklet with your family and friends.

You can also find a lot of helpful information at our website at www.mainehealth.org/diabetes.

You cannot cure diabetes, but you can manage it by learning how to control your blood sugar levels; doing this will help you feel better!

These five steps will help you manage your diabetes and lead an active and healthy life.

- Make healthy food choices
- Get regular physical activity
- Use your medicine correctly
- Test your blood sugar
- Get regular check-ups
What is the Target Diabetes Program?
The Target Diabetes Program is offered by MaineHealth to help improve care for people with diabetes. The goals of the program are to:

- Promote effective diabetes patient education and self-management skills for adults and their families.
- Promote public awareness of diabetes as a common, serious, and preventable chronic illness.
- Support doctors and nurses in providing high quality care to people with diabetes.
- Promote healthy lifestyles and activities that help prevent diabetes and its complications.

What is MaineHealth?
MaineHealth is a nationally-recognized, not-for-profit group of leading hospitals, physicians and healthcare organizations working together to help make the people of Maine the healthiest in America. As one of the nation’s most integrated healthcare delivery systems, we offer a comprehensive range of healthcare services to the communities of Southern, Central and Western and Midcoast Maine.

MaineHealth is working together to make high quality healthcare accessible to all. Our organizations share a common goal to support healthy individuals and healthy communities. We’re part of the fabric of our community, using our collective strengths to improve the health of area residents.

Imagine a day when diseases are preventable; outcomes are always positive and the highest quality healthcare is available to all. That’s the goal of each and every healthcare organization that makes up MaineHealth.

For more information about diabetes, the Target Diabetes Program, and MaineHealth please go to our web site at www.mainehealth.org/diabetes. You can contact us at the MaineHealth Learning Resource Center 1-866-609-5183.
Understanding Diabetes

**what is Diabetes**

Most of the food you eat is broken down into a sugar called glucose. Your body uses this sugar for energy. Insulin is a hormone that carries this sugar into your body’s cells. With uncontrolled diabetes, your body cannot move the sugar into your cells to be used for energy, so dangerous levels of sugar build up in your bloodstream.

**There are two major types of diabetes:**

1. **With Type 1 diabetes,** your body stops making insulin. Because of this, you need to take shots of insulin so your body can then carry the sugar into your cells.

2. **With Type 2 diabetes,** your body does not make enough insulin or it is not able to use the insulin it does make, causing a build up of sugar in your bloodstream. This is the most common type of diabetes. Certain medications can be taken to help your body carry insulin into your cells.

**Diabetes is Serious**

Over many years, high levels of blood sugar can damage your body. This damage can cause:

- Loss of feeling in your feet.
- Blindness.
- Problems with your heart and blood vessels.
- Damage to your kidneys.

Treating any of these changes to your body is important.

**What Can You Do?**

- Check your feet on a regular basis for any changes in feeling or appearance.
- Get regular eye exams and talk with your doctor if you experience any changes in your vision.
- Talk with your doctor if you experience any other discomfort or changes to your health.

There is no cure for diabetes, but there are many different things you can do to manage your blood sugar and reduce the risk of serious health problems. Keep reading for tips on managing your diabetes.
who can Help

Your healthcare team will be important for giving you information about how to manage your diabetes. Some of the important people include:

**Primary Care Provider** Your doctor will prescribe your medication and make any changes that are needed or will also make sure you get the tests you need to monitor your diabetes.

**Diabetes Educator** Some professionals such as nurses and dietitians specialize in helping people with diabetes. They can help you learn how and when to take your medications, how to eat well and exercise, and how to prevent health problems.

**Dietitian** These professionals help you learn how to select healthy food and how to balance your medication with the food you eat—this will help your blood sugar levels from getting too high or too low.
Carbohydrates (also known as “Carbs”) are an important part of healthy eating. Some foods that contain carbs are: grains, rice pasta, breads and crackers, cereals, beans and legumes, starchy vegetables like peas, corn and potatoes, milk and yogurt, fruit, juices and sweets.

The amount of carbs in the food you eat affects your blood sugar the most.

Talk with your dietitian to learn how to “carb count.” Learn how to plan your carbs into your meals and snacks.

Physical Activity

Physical activity is important for everyone. For people with diabetes, it is vital!

Physical activity will help:

- Lower your blood sugar levels.
- Lower your risk of heart disease (lower cholesterol and blood pressure numbers).
- Make your insulin work better.
- Keep a healthy weight.
- Raise your energy level.
- Relieve stress.
- Feel good about yourself.

Try these activities to add more movement to your life each day:

- Take the stairs, not the elevator.
- Park your car further away from the store.
- Play with your children / grandchildren.
- Walk instead of driving.
- In bad weather, walk around the inside of a mall.

Talk with your doctor before beginning any physical activity. Follow the guidelines that they give you. Start slow and easy; work toward increasing your pace and the length of time you are physically active.

If you take insulin or diabetes medicine, talk with your healthcare team about these tips for physical activity:

- Check your blood sugar more often.
- The dose of medicine you take may need to be changed.
- Balancing your food intake and medication with activity.
- You may need to eat a snack before physical activity to help prevent low blood sugar.
- Wear or carry an identification tag or card saying you have diabetes. You may get these at your pharmacy.
- Always carry a fast acting carbohydrate during activity in case you have symptoms of low blood sugar.

A fast-acting carbohydrate could be one of the following:

- 4 glucose tablets, or
- 4 oz. of fruit juice or regular soda, or
- 1 tablespoon of sugar or jelly, or
- 2 tablespoons of raisins, or
- 8 oz. of skim or low fat milk.
**medicines for Diabetes**

There are many medicines to help you control your blood sugar levels. Medications for diabetes work in different ways, and it is important that you know how and when to take yours in order to benefit most from their effects. Be sure to talk to your healthcare team about your medications.

**For people with:**

1. **Type 1 diabetes:** Because your body is no longer making insulin, you will need to get the insulin that your body needs in the form of shots (injection) or with an insulin pump. Your healthcare team will teach you how to do this.

2. **Type 2 diabetes:** Because your body is still making some insulin, your doctor may recommend medicine in the form of pills to help lower your blood sugar. Some people also need to take insulin or other medications by injections to control blood sugar. In either case, your healthcare team will teach you.

**To control the level of sugar in your blood, it is important to take your medicines safely. Here are a few helpful tips:**

- If you forget to take a pill, take it as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next scheduled dose, skip the one you missed and go back to your regular schedule. Never take two doses at the same time.

- If you forget an insulin shot, call a member of your healthcare team to ask when to take your next shot.

- Talk with your healthcare team and/or pharmacist about over the counter medicines and alcohol to learn if they will affect your medicine or blood sugar levels.
coping with Diabetes

Living with diabetes is a challenge and at times stressful. Learning about meal planning, staying physically active, controlling your weight, taking medicines, and checking your blood sugar levels along with all the other things in your life is very possible—many people do it successfully!

There may be times you do not want to think about your diabetes. You may feel sad, angry, worried, or stressed over the amount of work it takes to control your blood sugar levels. These feelings are normal unless they stop you from enjoying your life.

Get help from your doctor if:

- You feel sad, angry, worried, stressed, or cry often for more than 2 weeks, or
- These feelings make it hard to do your activities each day, or
- These feelings cause problems with your family or friends.

These can be signs of depression. Depression is more common in people with diabetes—don’t wait to get help. Your doctor or another healthcare professional can be a good source of information and support. If you want, they can help you find support groups in your area where you can meet others who are dealing with some of the same challenges.

Tips To Help You Cope

- Talk with your doctor and others about your feelings.
- Do activities that help you relax—remember those fun things you did before diabetes?
- Learn more about diabetes.
- Be more active.
Checking Blood Sugar and Problem Solving

The importance of Blood Sugar Testing

The Power to Manage Your Diabetes is in Your Hands

Controlling your blood sugar levels will help you stay healthy and feel your best. Testing your blood sugar helps you learn how physical activity, food, diabetes medicine, and stress can change your blood sugar levels.

The American Diabetes Association suggests that blood sugar levels should be between 80-130 mg/dl before meals and less than 180 mg/dl at peak 1-2 hours after meals. Keep in mind that blood sugar targets may not be the same for everyone.

Tips for Testing Your Blood Sugar

- Ask your doctor for information on getting a blood sugar (glucose) meter.
- Purchase your own blood sugar meter. You can find a meter in most drug stores.
- Learn how to use a meter and test your blood sugar at the times your doctor or diabetes educator suggest.
- Ask your doctor what your blood sugar targets should be.
- Review the results of each test stored within the meter.
- Share your test results with your doctor and diabetes educator at each visit.
- Ask questions and learn what your test results mean.
know your **high**

**Blood Sugar Symptoms**

When sugar in your blood stream cannot enter your cells, your blood sugar levels rise too high causing what is called “high blood sugar” or **HYPERglycemia**.

Be aware of the common symptoms of high blood sugar levels. If you have one or more of these symptoms, talk with your doctor.

- Frequent urination.
- Always tired.
- Always thirsty.
- Blurry vision.
- Slow healing cuts or sores.
- Frequent infections.
- Numbness or tingling in your hands and feet.
- Unexplained weight loss (though you are eating normally).
- Itchy or dry skin.

**important**

When your blood sugar rises too high, and stays high you have high blood sugar (HYPERglycemia). This means your diabetes is out of control. It can happen over a long period of time or very quickly.

**Common Causes of High Blood Sugar**

- Overeating
- Inactivity
- Illness
- Stress
- Skipping or missing diabetes medication or taking less than is needed
- Medication needs adjustment
know your **low** Blood Sugar Symptoms

At times, your blood sugar level may drop too low. This is called “low blood sugar” or HYPOglycemia. Levels below 70 mg/dl are too low and need to be treated right away!

If you have one or more of the symptoms listed below, test your blood sugar.

- Shaky, light-headed, or sweaty
- Weak or Headache
- Blurry Vision
- Hungry
- Irritable or Confusion
- Faster heartbeat than normal
- Anxious
- Numbness or tingling around lips

**important**

Not treating low blood sugar (HYPOglycemia) can lead to passing out for some people. Teach your family and friends what to do if you have low blood sugar. If you are unable to swallow or have passed out, you are not to be given anything to eat or drink. You need immediate treatment—911 should be called.

**Common Causes of Low Blood Sugar**

- More physical activity than usual
- Taking too much diabetes medicine or insulin
- Drinking alcohol
- Not eating enough food
- Skipping or delaying a meal

Tell your healthcare team if you have low blood sugar levels more than twice a week. They may need to adjust your diabetes medicine or meal plan.
Treating Low Blood Sugar

If your blood sugar is below 70 mg/dl, you need to treat it right away by:

1. Eating or drinking one of the following to raise your blood sugar level fast with 15 grams of carbohydrates. Examples include:
   - 4 glucose tablets, or
   - 4 oz. of fruit juice or regular soda, or
   - 1 tablespoon of sugar or jelly, or
   - 2 tablespoons of raisins, or
   - 8 oz. of skim or low fat milk.

2. Wait 15 minutes. Retest your blood sugar level. If it is still less than 70 mg/dl, treat again. Retest again in 15 minutes. Repeat cycle until blood sugar returns to normal. Once in normal range, consider a snack to prevent return of low blood sugar.
sick day Plan

The common cold, fever, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, happen to all of us. For people with diabetes, these common illnesses can raise your blood sugar levels. Having a sick day plan can help you manage your blood sugar levels and get you back on your feet sooner. Ask your healthcare team about having flu and pneumonia shots to help keep you healthy.

Make sure to follow these tips:

- **Follow your meal plan.** Your body needs energy to heal. If you have nausea or vomiting, choose liquids or soft foods such as soup, popsicles, crackers or toast to eat. These are easier on your stomach.

- **Drink plenty of fluids.** If you have vomiting or diarrhea, drink salty liquids such as broth, bouillon, tomato juice and broth-type soups. These will help to prevent dehydration. If you have high blood pressure, first check with your healthcare team.

- **Take all your diabetes medicine and/or insulin as scheduled.** You may need to take extra insulin while you are sick. Your healthcare team can teach you.

- **Test your blood sugar levels often** (at least every 4 hours).

important

If an illness lasts longer than 48 hours and your blood sugar levels are higher than your normal target range, call your doctor.

If you have Type 1 Diabetes, ask your healthcare team or educator how and when to test for ketones (key-tones).
Getting ready for a healthy pregnancy starts before you are pregnant. With excellent care and good blood sugar control before and during pregnancy you may help prevent diabetes related complications for you and your baby. Good blood sugar control can lower the risk of miscarriage and birth defects.

If you plan to have a baby:
- See a doctor for a complete check-up.
- See a dietitian for a healthy meal plan.
- Get your blood sugar levels into the target range.
- Avoid alcohol, tobacco, and drugs.
- Work with your diabetes team.
- Check with your doctor before using over the counter medicines.

Once you are pregnant:
- Your meal plan will need to be adjusted.
- If you take diabetes pills, they may be changed to insulin shots.
- Target ranges for your blood sugar levels will change. Learn the new range and continue to test often.
- Keep all appointments with your doctor and diabetes team.
- Avoid alcohol, tobacco, and drugs.
- Check with your doctor before taking any over the counter medicines.

Taking care of your diabetes is a lot of work, but it will help you have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby!
### American Diabetes Association Guidelines to Prevent Complications from Diabetes

Ask your healthcare provider if you have had the following done and what your results are. Your results should be similar to those in the “goal” column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Why it is Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blood Pressure</td>
<td>Less than 140/90 (Unless 130 may be appropriate for certain individuals)</td>
<td>Every visit</td>
<td>You can lower your blood pressure by eating a healthy diet, being physically active every day, and avoiding salt and alcohol. Talk to your doctor about medicines to lower blood pressure. Controlling blood pressure can help prevent heart disease, stroke and, kidney damage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemoglobin A1c</td>
<td>Less than 7%; Less stringent for those with advanced micro/macrovacular complications</td>
<td>Every 3 months or at least two times per year if at goal</td>
<td>Checks for control of your blood sugars over the past 2-3 months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-Density Lipids (LDL) “Bad” Cholesterol</td>
<td>Less than 100 mg/dL (for people with Cardiovascular Disease less than 70 mg/dL is optional)</td>
<td>Yearly (more often if needed to achieve goal)</td>
<td>You can lower your LDL and raise your HDL by eating healthy, being physically active every day, and aiming for a healthy weight. Your doctor may advise medications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-Density Lipids (HDL) “Good” Cholesterol</td>
<td>Greater than 40 mg/dl for men Greater than 50 mg/dL for women</td>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>HDL helps prevent cholesterol from building up in the arteries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triglycerides</td>
<td>Less than 150 mg/dL</td>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>Triglycerides are a form of fat in your blood that can raise your risk of heart disease. If your blood sugar is high, triglycerides can be high.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol</td>
<td>Less than 200 mg/dL</td>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>Keeping your LDL low and raising your HDL, can lower your risk of heart attack and stroke.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidneys/urine protein</td>
<td>Less than 30 mcg/mg</td>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>Checks for protein in your urine, a sign of early kidney damage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### SECTION 5 | Diabetes Self-Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Why it is Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspirin</td>
<td>Men over 50, Women over 50</td>
<td>Each day (unless otherwise indicated)</td>
<td>Primary prevention strategy for patients with increased cardiovascular risk: family history of CVD, hypertension, smoking, dyslipidemia, albuminuria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Foot Exam</td>
<td>Healthy feet</td>
<td>Yearly; self-check regularly</td>
<td>This exam will check the health of your feet, including skin, muscles, and blood flow. This can prevent serious foot problems—even having foot amputated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dilated Eye Exam</td>
<td>No retinal changes</td>
<td>Every 2 years if normal, yearly if abnormal</td>
<td>Checks for eye damage from diabetes, can prevent blindness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenza</td>
<td>Flu shot</td>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>Prevents a more severe form of the flu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pneumonia</td>
<td>Pneumovax vaccine</td>
<td>Discuss with your healthcare team</td>
<td>Prevents pneumonia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight (BMI or Body Mass Index)</td>
<td>BMI Percentile Less than 25</td>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>Aiming for a healthy weight can help you feel better and keep you from getting many illnesses. Your healthcare team can help you find a healthy eating plan that's right for you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking Cessation</td>
<td>To quit smoking</td>
<td>Discuss at every visit</td>
<td>Decreases premature death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teeth</td>
<td>Cleaning and exam</td>
<td>Every 6 months</td>
<td>Prevents tooth and gum disease.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
self-care ACTION PLANNING

Setting realistic goals is an important step in managing diabetes. This may help you identify some of those goals.

Name ____________________________________________ Date ______________________

set goals

You can begin to take care of yourself. Choose one or more of the following activities and set a goal.

- Choose something you want to do, not something you feel you should do.
- Choose a goal that you really believe you can do.
- Choose a friend or family member to help you track your success in meeting your goal.

Stay Physically Active
During the next week, I will (walk, bike, run, etc.) or ___________ at least ____ minutes at least ____ days (make it easy/reasonable).

Eat Healthy
During the next month:
- I will decrease my portion sizes.
- I will eat 3 evenly spaced meals each day.
- I will replace juice/soda with calorie free beverages.
- Other: ______________________

Avoid Tobacco, Alcohol and/or Other Drugs that are Bad for My Health
During the next month:
- I will call the Maine Tobacco Helpline at 1-800-207-1230 for help to quit smoking.
- I will decrease my alcohol intake to 1-2 drinks with food each week.
- Other: ______________________
**Practice Health Management**  
*(check one or two)*  

During the next month:  
- I will examine my feet at least ___ times per week.  
- I will check my blood sugar ___ times per day each week.  
- I will take my medicine as prescribed.  
- If advised by my doctor, I will take an aspirin each day.  
- I will keep all of my health care appointments.  
- I will make an appointment to get my eyes examined.  
- I will attend Diabetes self-management education.

**Practice Relaxing to Relieve Stress**  
*(check one or two)*  

**Every day** during the next week, I will practice relaxing by:  
- Deep breathing or meditation.  
- Laughing more.  
- Taking a warm bath.  
- Talking with a friend.  
- Finding a quiet, peaceful place for reflection/thought.  
- Making time for fun activities such as:  
  - Hobbies,  
  - Playing with kids, and  
  - Getting together with friends.  
- Other: ______________________
Once you have set your goals, use this next step to take action.

Name __________________________________________ Date ______________________

☐ I have worked with another provider to set a goal.

**take action**

1. **What I Will Do**
   - Choose One Goal:
     - I will ____________________________________________________
     - Examples: increase physical activity; take medications; make healthier food choices; reduce stress; reduce tobacco use.
   - Choose One Action:
     - I will ____________________________________________________
     - Examples: walk more; eat more fruits and vegetables.

2. **How Much / How Often**
   - How much:
     - Examples: 20 minutes.
   - How often:
     - Examples: three times a week on Monday, Wednesday, Friday.

3. **Confidence Level**
   - Circle a number to show how sure you are about doing the activity.
   - Try to choose an activity that you are a 7 or above.
   - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
     - **Not sure at all** Somewhat sure **Very sure**

My signature __________________________________________________________________________________

Healthcare provider signature ____________________________________________________________________

Understanding Diabetes—MaineHealth
Resources

National Resources

- American Diabetes Association
  - www.diabetes.org
  - phone – (1-800) 342-2383
- American Dietetic Association
  - www.eatright.org
  - phone – (1-800) 877-1600
- Centers for Disease Control, Diabetes Program
  - www.cdc.gov/nccdphp
- National Institutes of Health, Diabetes Program
  - www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov
- National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP)
  - www.ndep.nih.gov

Maine

- Maine Diabetes Prevention and Control Program
  - www.maine.gov/dhhs/bohdcfh/dcp
  - phone – (207) 287-5380
- Listing of Maine Diabetes Educators
  - www.mainediabeteseducators.org
- Target Diabetes Program
  - www.mainehealth.org/diabetes
- Maine Health Learning Resource Center
  - www.mainehealth.org
  - phone – (1-866) 609-5183

Magazines

- Diabetes Forecast (monthly)
  American Diabetes Association
  - www.diabetesforecast.org
  - phone – (1-800) 342-2383
- Diabetes Self-Management
  - www.diabetesselfmanagement.com
  - phone – (1-800) 322-2890

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