

Tips for Successful Living with Diabetes



Denise Cedar, RD, CDE
for
PEBB Health Center
May 24, 2005

Ten Commandments for Supporting Loved Ones with Diabetes

By Richard Rubin, CDE



1. Thou shalt not act like a Police person.
2. Thou shalt not ignore diabetes.
3. Thou shalt not lead your loved one in the paths of temptation.
4. Thou shalt not criticize when your loved one succumbs to temptation.
5. Thou shalt not talk about your loved one's diabetes in public unless invited to do so.
6. Thou shalt offer support and comfort, especially when things aren't going well with the diabetes.
7. Thou shalt have the patience of a Saint when your loved one is acutely hypo- or hyperglycemic.
8. Thou shalt deal constructively with your own natural fears and resentments.
9. Thou shalt be especially sensitive in public situations.
10. Thou shalt find out what works and do it.

How to Use Blood Sugar Monitoring to Improve Diabetes Control

1) Write your blood sugar readings in a logbook.

A logbook helps you keep track of all your morning blood sugars in one column and all your evening blood sugars in one column, etc.

2) Now look at the logbook for PATTERNS.

A pattern example - finding 3 or more blood sugars at the same time of the day that are too high or too low.

3) Don't make changes based on a single reading. There are often one or two readings a week which are out of range. If you make changes too rapidly, without seeing a pattern, it is easy to get your diabetes management plan out of kilter.

Pattern Example:

	Before breakfast	2 hrs. after breakfast	2 hrs. after lunch	2 hrs after supper
Monday	158	86	96	112
Tuesday	201	128	138	140
Wednesday	189	139	129	179
Thursday	197	111	116	139

4) In the example above, the time of the day when the blood sugars are out of the target range is **BEFORE BREAKFAST**. The blood sugars at this time of the day are all out of the target range for **3 or 4 days in a row. THIS IS A PATTERN.** There was only one high blood sugar after dinner. This is not enough to be a pattern, so it probably reflects eating too much at that one meal.

5) What to do? If you find a pattern ask yourself:

- Have I been **eating on time?**
- Have I been eating the **recommended amounts of food** on my meal plan?
- Have I been **exercising** on my usual schedule?
- Have I been **taking my medication as recommended?**

6) If you can answer yes to these questions you *may* need a medication change. Call your physician to discuss what to do.

Ten Tips for Eating Out with Diabetes



- 1) Make your plans so you won't be kept waiting for a table when you need to be eating—make reservations ahead when feasible. If your lunch or dinner is going to be later than usual, you can eat a fruit or starch serving from that meal at your usual mealtime. This prevents low blood sugar before the meal and also prevents hunger leading to overeating.
- 2) Read the menu creatively. Order a fruit cup for an appetizer or the breakfast melon for dessert. Instead of a dinner entree, combine a salad with a low-fat appetizer.
- 3) If you don't know what's in a dish or don't know the serving size, just ask. It's OK: You are the customer, and you are paying for what you want.
- 4) Try to eat the same portion as you would at home. Most restaurants serve far too much food. Ask for the take-home container to be delivered at the same time as your meal, take out the extra food and pack it up right away. You'll be able to enjoy it tomorrow!
- 5) Eat slowly, don't rush. Enjoy the ambiance, the company, the luxury of being served.
- 6) Ask for sauces, gravy and salad dressings "on the side." Try dipping your fork tines in the salad dressing, then spear a piece of lettuce. Or add a teaspoon of dressing at a time to your salad. You'll use less this way.
- 7) Ask for fish or meat broiled with no extra butter. Order foods that are not breaded or fried to control the extra fat. If the food comes breaded, peel off the outer coating.
- 8) Ask for substitutions. Instead of French fries, request a double order of a vegetable. If you can't get a substitute, just ask that the high-fat food be left off your plate—then you won't be tempted. Or order a la carte.
- 9) Limit alcohol: it adds calories but no nutrition to your meal.
- 10) It is OK to splurge once in a while, but remember that the more often you eat out, the more careful you need to be. If you do splurge, take a walk after dinner to burn up some of the extra calories and blood sugar.

Ten Walking with Diabetes Tips

1) Get in the Walking Habit

Make exercise a regular part of your life. Everyone, including people with diabetes, should exercise at least several days a week for good health. Walking is a great, low-impact and safe exercise for almost anyone.

2) Choose the Right Shoes

Taking care of your feet and preventing blisters is very important, as diabetes slows wound healing. Properly fitted athletic shoes will help prevent blisters and other injuries, such as plantar fasciitis. A good sports store will help fit you for the proper shoes for your feet. If you need orthotics, a podiatrist can custom-make them for you.

3) Socks are Important

Socks are also a critical defense against blisters. Toss out your 100% cotton socks - they retain sweat and can cause blisters. Socks made of today's miracle fabrics can wick away sweat and prevent blisters.

4) Check Your Blood Sugar Levels

Check your blood sugar levels before and after walking. Too low: below 100 mg/dl you should eat some carbohydrates - 15 to 30 grams for each 30-60 minutes of anticipated exercise. Too high: over 250 mg/dl if Type 1, you need to postpone your walk until your blood sugar level lowers. When out on a long walk or hike, it is wise to check your blood sugar levels at regular intervals, especially if you are new to exercise.

5) When to Walk

The best time for walking is 1-2 hours after a meal, when your insulin and blood sugar levels have settled down. If you take NPH insulin in the morning you'll need to test blood sugar and have a snack if you walk in the afternoon, when NPH peaks.

6) Your Insulin Needs May Change

Your insulin requirements will change with exercise. When starting a walking program or increasing your amount of exercise, consult with your physician regularly on how to adjust your medications.

7) Don't Forget to Drink (Water)

Drink up to prevent dehydration, which you may not notice until it is too late. Drink a glass of water an hour before walking, then drink more water about every 30-45 minutes. At the end of your walk, drink another glass of water. For long, hot hikes of 3 hours or more, consider a sports drink that replaces salts - but check the carbohydrate content on the label. You may dilute it with water if high.

8) Eating and Walking

Carry along a snack or some glucose tablets to use if you or your walking partner detects signs of low blood sugar. Especially when starting or increasing your walking program, be extra aware of symptoms and signs, listen to your body, and test a bit more often.

9) Know the Signs of Hypoglycemia

When walking, stay aware of your body and how you are feeling. It can be difficult to tell whether you are sweating from exertion or hypoglycemia. Symptoms of low blood sugar include feeling weak, drowsy, confused, hungry, and dizzy. Paleness, headache, irritability, trembling, sweating, rapid heart beat, and a cold, clammy feeling.

10) Buddy Up

Walking with a partner or walking club has several benefits. First, walking with somebody else keeps you more regular in your exercise. Second, you can have them watch you for signs of low blood sugar.

Tips for Keeping a Food Diary

Weight management research has consistently demonstrated that people who keep a food diary are more successful at weight loss. A food diary will help you learn when, how much, and why you eat. Information is the first step in change. The food diary can also keep you focused and motivated.

- 1) Write down the day of the week and the time of day or night that you eat something -- It can help to show you when you tend to eat. Some activities, such as watching TV, going to the movies, or taking a coffee break, can trigger eating out of habit rather than out of hunger. Watch out for them!
- 2) Record the entry in your diary as soon as you eat something -- It's easy to forget the details over the course of the day.
- 3) Also record any pre-or-post-meal blood sugar tests, to learn how your food choices affect your diabetes control. Sometimes the results are surprising.
- 4) Be as specific as possible -- Measure or estimate portions. Don't just write that you had a sandwich. Write down that you had a sandwich with two slices of roast beef, a slice of tomato, a tablespoon full of light mayonnaise and two slices of rye bread.
- 5) Focus on accountability when you are trying to make a change: Make an entry every single time you eat, no matter where you are, what time it is, or how small the amount of food. If you eat two M&Ms, write it down. If you eat a slice of a co-worker's birthday cake, write it down. If you sleepwalk down to the kitchen in the middle of the night and eat a huge bowl of ice cream, write it down.
- 6) To learn about physical or emotional factors which affect your eating, make notes about why you ate or how you felt at the time. . It can be as simple as "I was hungry," or "I was bored," or "it just looked good" to "It was a co-worker's birthday and I didn't want to be the only one who didn't have a piece of cake." This kind of information can help you figure out what motivates you to eat, show you when getting too hungry leads to overeating, or help you pinpoint environmental triggers which you can change.
- 7) Be honest -- No one wants to write down that they've overindulged, but keeping an inaccurate diary won't help you. Even if you overeat, record it and record why.
- 8) At the same time, don't be too hard on yourself: the diary is a tool to help you learn, stay focused, and make changes. It doesn't have to be perfect, just an accurate reflection of your day. Aiming for perfection promotes stress and makes you give up. You'll get great results if you can just achieve your goals 80-90% of the time.