

Lifestyle Changes for Better Diabetes Management

Although there may not be one single reason why you have Type 2 Diabetes, one of the key risk factors is being overweight. In fact, Type 2 Diabetes is often called a lifestyle disease because many of the choices you make every day can lead to weight gain which may have contributed to your diagnosis.

As you get older, it gets hard to keep the weight off without making healthy food choices and getting regular exercise. But your busy life can make it difficult to find time to exercise and can lead you to choose quick and easy meals and snacks that are often high in calories and low in nutrients.

Instead of keeping up these unhealthy habits, begin to make lifestyle changes, even small ones, to get your blood glucose in control.

In order to make a change for better diabetes health, it helps to have a plan. You can use your Diabetes Management plan as a guide.

Your diabetes management plan will include information on making healthy food choices, getting regular physical activity, taking medications if necessary and monitoring your blood glucose. It may also include steps you can take to help you manage any other health problems that can affect your diabetes self-care.

To help you decide where to begin, take a moment and think – what is the one thing about your lifestyle that, if you changed it, would improve your diabetes management? Is it your food choices? The amount of activity you do? Taking your medications every day?

When you think of all the changes you can make to improve your health and manage diabetes, it is easy to become overwhelmed. You are trying to change habits you have lived with for years and it isn't easy.

Once you do decide on the area you want to focus on, make a list of small changes you can make. For example, if you decide that you would like to make healthy food choices, take a look at your habits. If you regularly snack on chips after dinner, maybe you can substitute carrots or another crunchy vegetable instead. Once that becomes a habit, try to make another change.

Don't get frustrated. Take it one step at a time. To be successful, make a commitment today to make just one small change. Each change you make is a positive step toward better blood glucose control.

"I used to be heavy on fried chicken wings ...so, you know that wasn't good, 'cause that's where all the fat is the wings. So, I kinda gave that up. I haven't had one in a while. Don't want to think about it."- Pam, Patient

And many of the changes you make to manage your blood glucose will also help you manage your blood pressure, cholesterol and weight; helping to reduce your overall risk of diabetes and get healthier as a whole.

You don't have to do this alone. Reach out to your diabetes care team to set goals and get feedback on your

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progress. Positive feedback and encouragement can help keep you going in the right direction.

If you find you are having trouble reaching your goals, your diabetes care team can help you figure out why. Talk to them about the challenges you face and together adjust your plan so you are moving in a healthy direction.

When you make lifestyle changes for better diabetes management, remember, you are taking action to control your blood glucose in order to avoid serious health problems in the future. Use your management plan as a guide. Make one small change at a time. Reach out to your diabetes care team for support and feedback. And make adjustments to your plan if necessary to keep moving toward your goal.

“When I wake up in the morning I walk around the track. I go out and I’ve met different people out there and they’re walking for different things-- different reasons but I know why I’m walking, trying to keep the weight down and keep the sugar down, because exercising does help your diabetes.”- Sam, Patient

If you keep focusing on one small change at a time, you will have a greater chance of successfully reaching your goal and making true changes that last a lifetime. Each success will take you that much closer to better diabetes management and a healthy future.