

Managing Your Diabetes: Problem Solving

Narrator

When you have diabetes, you learn to plan your eating, your daily activity, your life so that your blood sugar levels stay on target: not too high, not too low. But unexpected things happen, no matter how well we plan. So, learning to problem solve and quickly adapt is key.

Cecilia Sauter, Diabetes Educator, University of Michigan

Life has a way of throwing us curve balls. Sometimes things just happen that can drive your blood sugar in the wrong direction. Part of managing this disease is knowing not only how to respond in the moment, but also thinking about what you can do to prevent it from happening again: problem solve.

Narrator

Gilberto Vaquero was excited to be starting his last year in college 2 years ago, when he found himself in the hospital, facing a life-changing diagnosis: diabetes.

Gilberto Vaquero, Diabetes Patient

It was almost just too much to handle.

Narrator

From a care-free college student whose diet often consisted of beer and pizza, Gilberto admits he didn't handle the news well.

Gilberto Vaquero, Diabetes Patient

So it did prove significantly difficult in the coming months to kind of completely change my current lifestyle that I had freshman through junior year, to now this completely different thing that I had to manage to stay alive.

Narrator

Gilberto now exercises at least 5 times a week. And in the two years since being diagnosed, he's become quite smart about living with diabetes.

Gilberto Vaquero, Diabetes Patient

Being prepared has become a big part of my life.

Narrator

That lesson was driven home by a trip he took after college.

Gilberto Vaquero, Diabetes Patient

When I went to Europe, I was actually in Paris and out of nowhere, it wasn't a violent mugging or anything, but next thing I know my backpack's gone, which included my medicine, which is super important for me to stay alive. It definitely opened my eyes to just kind of being prepared for any situation, whether it's small things like I have medicine at work, that I keep just in case I forget my medicine.

Narrator

He always has some candy available, too.

Gilberto Vaquero, Diabetes Patient

Because that's the quicker way to ingest sugar if my blood sugar ever does happen to get a little low.

Narrator

If your blood sugar levels are too low, you'll need glucose or sugar right away. This could include taking glucose tablets or a tablespoon of sugar, corn syrup or honey, drinking some juice or regular soda, or eating raisins, hard candies or gum drops. Your diabetes educator or healthcare provider can help you figure out what and how much is best for you. Also, your diabetes needs may change over time, so be prepared to

make adjustments if previous solutions no longer work. Diabetes educators can help problem solve, in general and for specific issues you may be facing.

Here are some tips:

- Don't beat yourself up: Managing your diabetes doesn't mean being "perfect." If you encounter a problem, solve it and learn from it.
- Analyze your day: think about what was different:
 - Were you more stressed than usual?
 - Were you traveling?
 - Were you sick?
 - Did something change in your routine?
 - Were you more or less active than usual?
 - Did you eat more carbohydrates than normal?
 - Was your diabetes medication off?

Learn from it: figure out how to correct the problem in the future:

- Limit your alcohol consumption because it affects your blood sugar and can interact with your medications. If you have a drink, don't do so on an empty stomach.
- Consider how you can add more activity into your day.
- Think of ways to ease stress, such as meditating, doing yoga, or sitting quietly for a few minutes with a cup of tea or a good book.

Jasmine Gonzalvo, Pharmacist, Diabetes Educator, Purdue University

If there are changes with your diabetes, your diabetes educator, healthcare team, or diabetes support group can help you find the plan that's most comfortable for you to meet your needs!

Narrator

Problem Solving. One of 7 steps to a healthier you.