

Lesson 1 - Healthy Coping

Living with diabetes means coping with diabetes. It can be tough to manage. Since diabetes is a chronic (on-going) disease, it requires daily self-care. This can cause stress, anxiety, and depression. Diabetes related stress is often called “Diabetes Distress”.

Diabetes Distress can also include denial, low or no motivation to do what you know you need to do, or feelings of frustration, fear or anger.

Reducing diabetes-related stress

- Make time for you. Carve out time for what you need including sleep, fun activities and relaxing.
- Find support from friends and family plus professional help from MYC LAMP department.
- Recognize your stressors and use relaxation techniques and mindfulness.

LAMP is the behavioral health benefit for employees and eligible dependents of the ManateeYourChoice Health Plan. LAMP Advocates provide the emotional and behavioral support needed to make lifestyle changes. LAMP strives to help members improve overall wellbeing at home and in the workplace. LAMP is a voluntary, confidential, and solution-focused counseling service.

**For assistance during standard working hours (M-F 8am - 5pm), call the LAMP line at (941) 741-2995.
All calls are confidential.**

If you are having a rough time caring for yourself, you may want support from others who have diabetes with a peer support community online such as [diaTribe Foundation](#) [TuDiabetes](#) or [DiabetesSisters](#); or these apps: Carenity, T2D Healthline or Diabetes Forum.

The good news is that most Diabetes Distress can be effectively managed with access to adequate person-centered care, medications if needed and education.

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Lesson 2 - Eating Healthfully

Nutrition is a super important topic in diabetes care. Eating healthy is one area where you are the boss. You will want to be educated and have a plan because the evil food scientists are just around the corner waiting to sell you their unhealthy foods.

You are the boss.

- Know which foods raise blood sugar. Yes, carbohydrates tend to make blood sugar spike. But there are poor quality carbohydrates like sweets and snack foods, and then there are quality carbohydrates that give your body good long-burning fuel. Quality carbohydrates include fruit, yogurt, whole grains, and beans. Try to eat mainly quality carbohydrates and spread them out evenly through the day.
- You also can check your own blood sugar 2 hours after eating to find out which foods or meals affect your blood sugar, and which do not. Below 180 means you handled it well.
- Manage portion sizes. Baby steps are the way to go here to gradually reduce portion sizes that may be causing you trouble
- Seek healthy choices when eating out/picking up

Your Tools and Resources

1. Visit **Start Simple with MyPlate** <https://www.myplate.gov/> And there is an App: <https://www.myplate.gov/resources/tools/startsimple-myplate-app> to set small goals, track progress and earn badges
2. Read **Food Portions: Choosing Just Enough** <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/weight-management/just-enough-food-portions>
3. Post on the fridge **Quality vs poor quality carbohydrates** (handout)
4. Look at **Dining Out/ Take Home Tips** <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/managing/eat-well/eating-out.html>

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Lesson 3 - Being Active

Becoming and staying active can give you more control over your blood sugar and your overall health. This includes all the ways you move your body and spend less time sitting.

There are so many benefits to physical activity.

- Any amount of physical activity is beneficial. Just moving more and sitting less as part of your day works, even if it's not part of a structured exercise plan.
- Helps to manage blood sugar levels, lowers blood pressure and cholesterol.
- Improves mood, reduces stress, anxiety and depression.
- Keeps bones, muscles and joints in good condition.
- Allows for better sleep.
- Helps with weight loss.

Review these safety tips:

- Always check in with your health care provider when you start or change any activity.
- Check blood sugar before exercising to see if it is in the safe zone (90 - 240) to exercise.
- Make sure to have a carb snack on hand in case of low blood sugar (for example, a granola bar or small pack of raisins) and bring some glucose tablets.
- Wear a medical ID bracelet.
- Protect your feet. Wear good fitting shoes and check your feet after exercising for any irritation or blisters.
- If you haven't been active for a while, don't overdo it!

SIMPLE WAYS TO BE MORE ACTIVE:

AT HOME

Walk your dog and play fetch
Work in your garden
Clean your house
Lift weights, march in place or walk around the room while watching TV



AT WORK

Walk at lunch
Exercise in your chair
Take the stairs
Stand while on the phone, reading or eating
Talk face-to-face with your coworkers



WHEN YOU'RE OUT

Go dancing
Do tai chi
Take a walk after dinner
Park far away from the door
Wear a pedometer



Your Tools and Resources

1. Read **Active at Any Size** <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/weight-management/staying-active-at-any-size>
2. Learn about your Manatee YourChoice Fitness benefits including Downtown Fitness Center amenities and Fitness classes www.manateeyourchoice.com

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Lesson 4 - Medication

Lifestyle choices plus medication interventions:

Taking your medications AND living a healthy lifestyle are critical to managing Diabetes. It's important to realize that your medication is working even if you can't feel it. You will want to be consistent about taking meds every day to prevent the complications of diabetes 5 or 10 years from now.

Remembering

Forgetting to take medications is commonplace but could be dangerous over time. To remember to take your medications consistently, leave pills or your pen where you can see them. You may want to use daily pill containers. You can easily set an alarm on your phone or use a free text reminder service such as Glucose Buddy or Med Simple (there are many more).

Side effects

Learn how your medication works and the possible side effects - ask your doctor or pharmacist. If you have concerns. Every medication has side effects but these feelings outweigh the negative impact of uncontrolled blood glucose levels. If hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) is a side effect of your medication or insulin, carry glucose tablets with you and make sure to have some in your glove box.

Storing properly

Store medications in a cool dry place - not the bathroom medicine cabinet. Keep insulin and other injectable medications in the refrigerator. Once the pen is opened, it can be stored at room temperature - which is a good idea because injecting cold medications is painful. Don't reuse needles. It can cause infections or air can get into the insulin or injectable med and break it down. Pen needles are available at no cost from Manatee YourChoice Employee Health Benefits.

You may need an Endocrinologist

Not all primary care doctors are up to date on medications to treat diabetes. If you are taking your medications consistently and your blood sugar remains high, you may need to see a diabetes specialist - an Endocrinologist. Find one here <https://manateeyourchoice.com/provider-directory>

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Lesson 5 - Discover Your Trends & Triggers

What is your blood sugar doing right now? Is it high? Low? Medium? You really don't know.

Some people report that they can tell when blood sugar is high because they become thirsty or have to urinate frequently or vision becomes blurry. This may be true, but it is also unreliable because there might be other reasons for being thirsty, having to go or having eyesight problems. And if your blood sugar is often or always high, your body may become accustomed to this, and you have no symptoms at all. You may feel fine, but if your blood sugar is high there is silent damage going on in your body which may result in some of the complications of diabetes 5 or 10 years down the road.



Why test blood sugar? What's in it for me?

Blood sugar testing is annoying and painful. Why bother? Because it gives us vital information. It lets you know if you need to adjust medication, food or exercise.

Testing blood sugar at home shows:

- Your own patterns and trends of high or low blood sugar levels.
- Which foods or meals affect your blood sugar.
- The effects of physical activity.
- If something else may be wrong such as an infection (bladder, teeth), medication, expired, equipment not working properly etc.

How to observe blood sugar at home

Glucometer

Using a glucometer allows you to see if you are experiencing a blood sugar value that might be higher or lower than what is desired. It also lets you know what time of the day your blood sugar tends to be higher or lower, your own personal patterns, how your blood sugar responds to certain foods or meals and if your medication is working well. A glucometer requires a fingerstick and a drop of blood on a special test strip placed into the glucometer. All MYC members can obtain a glucometer and test strips at no cost on an on-going basis. We will teach you how to use it properly, suggest when to test and what numbers are in your target zone. There is an app that works with the glucometer via Bluetooth and has different charts and graphs that can give you lots of helpful information. Call the Diabetes Specialist to make an appointment to get started with your own glucometer. 941-748-4501 x6410.

Blood Sugar Targets

There are basically 4 times you might want to test using a glucometer. Your doctor or diabetes educator can suggest how many times per day to test and when to do it that is best for you.

When	What this tells you	Target numbers
If you are feeling odd or unwell	If you need to treat hypoglycemia (low blood sugar)	70 or below = hypoglycemia
	If you need to eat a meal or snack	80 or below means you may be heading towards hypoglycemia
	If you need to contact your doctor	More than 3 days of being consistently above 200 may mean your doctor needs to see you. You should also let your doctor know if you are experiencing more

		than 2 low blood sugar episodes per week
When you first wake up (Fasting)	What your blood sugar is doing with no environmental influences	70 - 130
Two hours after eating	This value indicates how well you handled a meal or can help you discover certain foods you may be sensitive to that cause a sharp rise of blood sugar	Below 180
Bedtime	Being high every night when you head to dreamland is a problem	Below 150

Low blood sugar/**hypoglycemia** = 70 or below (See handout on Preventing and Treating Hypoglycemia)

Tips for more comfortable testing

- Drink a glass of water before testing to ensure good blood volume for less squeezing to obtain a drop of blood.
- Test on the side of the fingertip instead of the center .
- Rotate fingers.
- Change lancet at least once a week. A sharp lancet hurts less than a dull one.
- Try some fresh aloe vera gel on fingers if they become sore or use a special healing moisturizer sold in the diabetes section of the pharmacy.

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Lesson 6 - Live Long and Prosper

You can definitely live a long and healthy life with diabetes. To ensure this, you will want to take an active role to prevent some of the things that high blood sugar can do to cause damage in the body (called diabetes complications). The number one way to stay healthy with diabetes is keeping blood sugar in the target range for as long as possible each day. This is called **Time in Range**. Time in range is the amount of time that blood sugar remains between 70 to 180.

Team Approach

Get the support you need to help you do this from your team, which may include:

- Primary Care Doctor
- Endocrinologist
- Certified Diabetes Educator
- Registered Dietitian
- Pharmacist
- Mental Health Specialist
- Ophthalmologist
- Podiatrist
- Cardiologist
- Health Coach

Take care of your heart

High blood sugar levels can damage the blood vessels and the nerves that control your heart. Controlling cholesterol levels and blood pressure are two factors that will help lower the risk. Be aware that smoking cigarettes or using other tobacco products can increase the risk for heart disease too.

Take care of your eyes

Protect your eyesight by having a dilated eye exam once each year. Your eye doctor will look at the back of your retina to see if there is any damage or leakage in the small vessels here. If caught early, a laser can seal the leaky vessels and prevent vision loss.

Take care of your kidneys

Diabetes can damage the kidneys causing chronic kidney disease and 1 in 3 people with diabetes develop chronic kidney disease. If caught early, several treatments can keep it from becoming worse. An annual urine screening (urine microalbumin test) is recommended for all people with diabetes. This will indicate if kidneys are not functioning normally.

Controlling blood sugar and blood pressure can improve chronic kidney disease. Losing weight if you need to, improves both blood sugar and blood pressure. Reducing salt has a direct effect on your kidneys. Most of our sodium intake comes not from the saltshaker, but from eating at restaurants or take-out meals, deli meats, hot dogs, bacon, cheese, pizza, macaroni and cheese, canned foods, and snack foods.

Take care of your feet

Since the feet are the most common area that neuropathy occurs, it is important to protect them. You can do this by checking your feet each day for red spots, cuts, swelling or blisters. Nerve damage can cause numbness and loss of sensation in your feet. Don't go barefoot. Always wear shoes, indoors and out to protect them from slight injuries that could become infected. Make sure shoes fit well. Put lotion on your dry feet, but not between the toes. Try to elevate your feet while sitting.

Get a complete foot exam from your primary care physician or a podiatrist once a year.

Take care of your skin

Anyone can have skin conditions, but people with diabetes get them more easily. These include itching and both bacterial and fungal infections. High blood sugar levels are associated with dry skin.

To avoid skin problems don't take showers or baths that are very hot, use a moisturizing soap, unscented lotion (but not between the toes), and treat cuts right away with antibiotic ointment and a bandage.

Cellulitis is an infection of the deeper layers of the skin that can be serious by spreading to the bloodstream if it goes untreated. It occurs most often on feet or lower legs but can affect anyplace on the body. Symptoms are swelling, tenderness, discoloration and often feels hot or painful to the touch. Eczema or athlete's foot conditions increase the risk for cellulitis.

Take care of your teeth

Diabetes may cause a stronger inflammatory response to cavities or other infection. High blood sugar levels can help gum disease get worse. At the same time, if you have gum disease or an infection in your tooth, it can raise blood sugar.

To prevent dental problems, tell your dentist you have diabetes, brush twice a day, floss daily, and don't skip your regular dentist appointments.

You have a team of Manatee YourChoice advocates to assist you!

Visit www.manateeyourchoice.com

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