

Living Well with Diabetes

Practical steps for staying
healthy and in control



Understanding Diabetes

Diabetes is a common health condition that affects how your body turns food into energy. Most of what we eat breaks down into sugar (also called glucose), which gives our cells energy. The hormone **insulin**, made by your pancreas, helps move that sugar from your blood into your cells.

When you have diabetes, your body either doesn't make enough insulin or can't use it properly. As a result, sugar builds up in your blood instead of being used for energy. Over time, high blood sugar can affect many parts of your body—including your heart, kidneys, eyes, and nerves.

The Two Main Types of Diabetes

1 Type 1 Diabetes

Your body doesn't make insulin. This type is less common and often diagnosed earlier in life.

2 Type 2 Diabetes

Your body still makes insulin, but it doesn't use it effectively. This is the most common type among adults, especially older adults. Lifestyle factors such as diet, weight, and physical activity can all play a role.

Common Symptoms

- Increased thirst or hunger
- Frequent urination
- Fatigue or lack of energy
- Blurry vision
- Slow-healing cuts or sores
- Numbness or tingling in your hands or feet



If you notice any of these symptoms, it's important to talk to your doctor. The sooner diabetes is diagnosed, the sooner you can take steps to manage it and protect your health.

How Common Is Diabetes?



Nearly **1 in 3 adults aged 65 and older** has diabetes. However, with the right care, most people with diabetes can live long, healthy, and active lives. Understanding how diabetes works is the first step toward managing it.

Why Managing Your Diabetes Matters

When blood sugar levels stay too high for too long, it can slowly damage parts of the body you rely on every day, like your **heart, kidneys, eyes, nerves, and even your feet**. Over time, uncontrolled diabetes can increase your risk for serious health problems like heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, or vision loss.

But here's the good news, **managing diabetes really works**. Even small steps, like taking your medication on time, staying active, and eating balanced meals, can make a big difference in how you feel day to day.

What Happens When Blood Sugar Is Controlled

When you keep your blood sugar in a healthy range, you:



Feel more energetic and alert



Reduce your risk of heart and kidney problems



Heal faster from cuts and infections

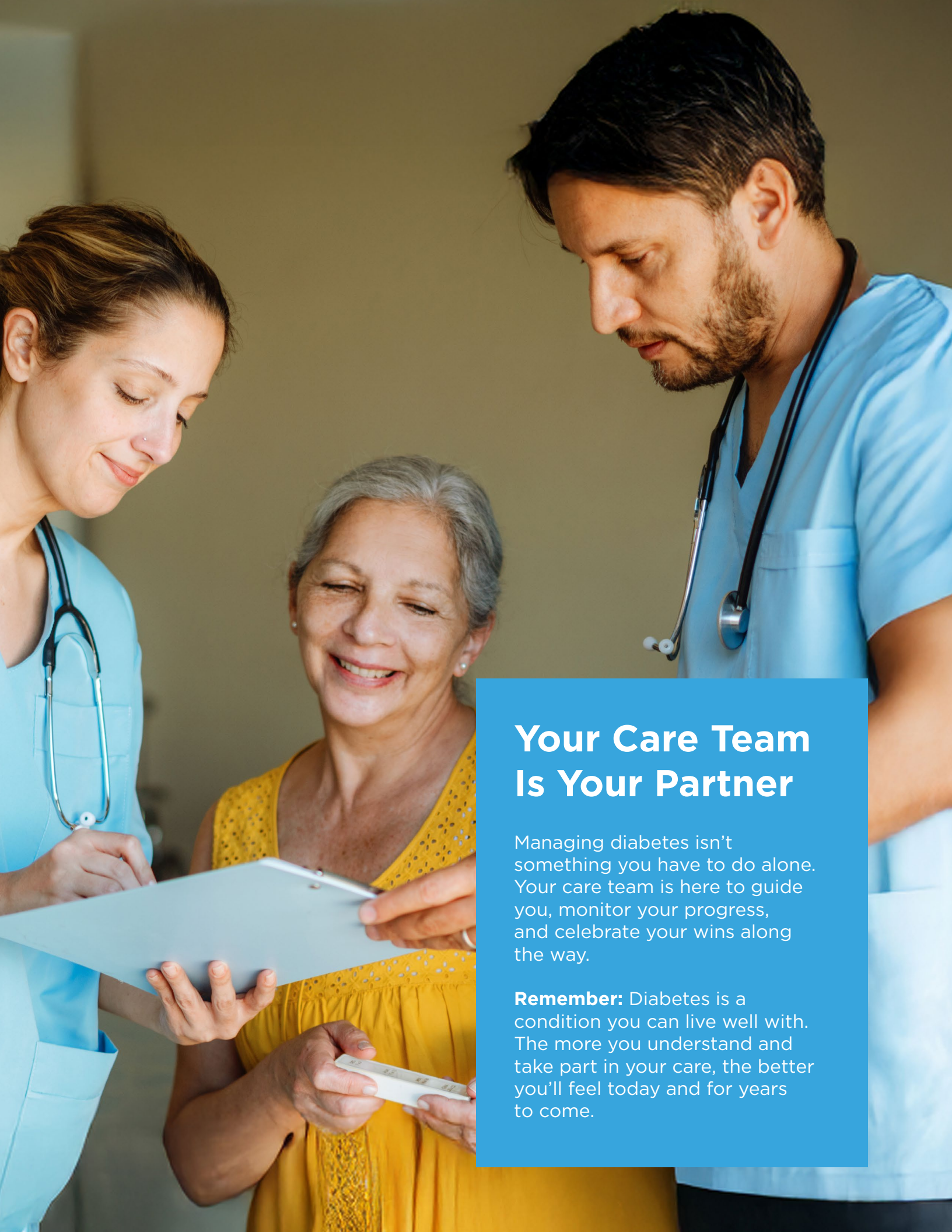


Stay independent and active longer



Protect your eyesight and circulation

Every healthy choice adds up. You don't need to change everything at once. Focus on one or two small goals at a time. Your doctor and care team can help you decide where to start.



Your Care Team Is Your Partner

Managing diabetes isn't something you have to do alone. Your care team is here to guide you, monitor your progress, and celebrate your wins along the way.

Remember: Diabetes is a condition you can live well with. The more you understand and take part in your care, the better you'll feel today and for years to come.

Spot the Signs

Keeping your blood sugar in a healthy range is one of the most important parts of living well with diabetes. When your blood sugar gets too high or too low, your body will usually send warning signs. Learning to recognize those signs early can help you take action before things get serious.

High Blood Sugar (Hyperglycemia)

When there's too much sugar in your blood, your body may not have enough insulin, or it may not be using insulin properly. High blood sugar can build up slowly over time or spike quickly after eating or during illness.

Common Causes

- Eating more food or carbohydrates than usual
- Missing a dose of insulin or diabetes medicine
- Being less active than normal
- Feeling stressed or sick

Symptoms to Watch For

- Increased thirst
- Frequent urination
- Blurry vision
- Feeling tired or weak
- Headaches
- Slow-healing cuts or sores

What You Can Do

- Check your blood sugar using your meter or monitor
- Drink water to stay hydrated and help your body flush out excess sugar
- Follow your care plan and continue taking your medicines as prescribed
- Get some gentle activity, like a short walk, if your doctor has said it's safe
- Call your doctor if your blood sugar stays high or if you feel unwell



TIP: Blood sugar levels above **180 mg/dL** after meals are considered high, but your personal target may be different. Ask your doctor what range is right for you.

Low Blood Sugar (Hypoglycemia)

Low blood sugar happens when your body has too little glucose to use for energy. This can come on suddenly, and it's important to act fast when you notice the signs.

Common Causes

- Skipping or delaying a meal
- Taking too much insulin or diabetes medicine
- Being more active than usual
- Drinking alcohol without eating enough food

Symptoms to Watch For

- Feeling shaky, dizzy, or weak
- Sweating or chills
- Confusion or irritability
- Blurry vision
- Headaches
- Feeling sleepy or lightheaded

What You Can Do

1. Check your blood sugar right away.

If it's below **80 mg/dL**, you need quick sugar.

2. Eat or drink one of the following:

- 4 ounces of juice or regular (not diet) soda
- 1 tablespoon of sugar or honey
- 2 tablespoons of raisins
- 1 small apple or orange

3. Recheck your blood sugar after **15 minutes**. If it's still low, repeat the same steps.

4. Call your doctor if your symptoms don't improve or if your blood sugar keeps dropping.



TIP: Never ignore signs of low blood sugar. Acting quickly can prevent accidents, confusion, or fainting.





When to Call Your Doctor

Call your doctor right away if:

- Your blood sugar stays over 240 mg/dL or below 80 mg/dL despite treatment
- You feel chest pain, have trouble breathing, or are unusually sleepy
- You've been vomiting or have diarrhea for more than 4 hours
- You notice sores or infections that don't heal
- You have tingling or numbness in your hands, legs, or feet

In an emergency, call 911.

It's always better to get help right away.

Small Steps for Big Results

Managing diabetes doesn't mean making big changes all at once. In fact, the biggest improvements often come from small, consistent steps you take each day. Every healthy choice you make, no matter how small, can help you feel better, stay active, and live the life you want.

Every small step adds up to better control.

Stay Active

Movement helps your body use insulin better and keeps blood sugar steady. Aim for about **30 minutes of activity most days**.



Take a walk after meals



Do gentle stretches
or chair exercises



Try light hand weights
or water aerobics

The key is being consistent. Find something you enjoy so it becomes part of your routine.



Take Your Medications

Take your diabetes medicines exactly as prescribed, even on days you feel fine. Try taking them at the same time each day or use a reminder app or pill organizer.

If you ever have side effects or trouble affording your medication, let your doctor know. There are always options and resources to help.

Eat Smart

Food plays a big role in blood sugar control. You don't have to give up everything you love. Just make a few healthy swaps:

- Choose water instead of soda
- Pick whole fruit instead of juice
- Try brown rice instead of white rice
- Go for baked foods instead of fried ones

Balanced meals with lean proteins, vegetables, and whole grains help you stay full and energized.

Check Your Numbers



Keep track of your blood sugar levels as directed by your doctor. Recording your readings helps you see patterns and know what's working. Bring your log or app to your appointments so your care team can adjust your plan if needed.

Care for Your Feet, Eyes, and Teeth

High blood sugar can affect circulation and healing.

- Check your feet daily for cuts or sores
- Schedule yearly eye exams and dental checkups

Catching small problems early helps prevent bigger issues later.

Manage Stress and Get Support

Stress can raise your blood sugar. Find ways to relax, such as walking, reading, listening to music, or connecting with friends. Support groups or social activities can help you stay encouraged and motivated.

Healthy Food Swaps and Nutrition Tips

Living with diabetes doesn't mean giving up all your favorite foods—it's about finding balance. Making a few smart swaps can help keep your blood sugar steady while still letting you enjoy what you eat. Small choices, made often, lead to lasting results.

Simple Swaps for Better Blood Sugar



Swap soda for water

Regular soda and other sweetened drinks are packed with sugar, which can quickly raise blood glucose levels. Choose water, sparkling water with lemon or lime, or unsweetened tea instead.



Swap fruit juice for whole fruit

Even 100% fruit juice contains natural sugars that can cause blood sugar spikes. Whole fruits have fiber, which slows sugar absorption and helps you feel full longer.



Swap fried foods for baked or grilled ones

Baking, broiling, or grilling reduces added fats and calories while keeping flavor intact. Try oven-baked chicken or air-fried veggies for a lighter twist on your favorites.



Swap white rice for brown rice or other whole grains

Whole grains have more fiber and nutrients that help manage blood sugar levels. You can also experiment with quinoa, barley, or cauliflower rice for variety.



Use smaller plates for portion control

Sometimes our eyes are bigger than our stomachs. Using a smaller plate helps you eat reasonable portions without feeling deprived. Fill half your plate with non-starchy veggies, a quarter with lean protein, and a quarter with whole grains or starchy foods.

Tools That Help

Low blood sugar happens when your body has too little glucose to use for energy. This can come on suddenly, and it's important to act fast when you notice the signs..

Helpful Apps to Keep You on Track



Medisafe

Never forget a dose again. Medisafe lets you set medication reminders, see pill images for easy identification, and track progress over time. You can even share updates with a loved one or caregiver for extra peace of mind.



MyFitnessPal

A simple way to stay mindful of what you eat. Log meals, snacks, and drinks to see how your food choices affect your energy and blood sugar. The free version offers a large food database and barcode scanning for easy tracking.



Glucose Buddy

Designed specifically for people with diabetes, Glucose Buddy helps you log your blood sugar readings, medications, carb intake, and activity all in one place. You can generate reports to review with your doctor at your next visit.



SilverSneakers GO

(included with many Medicare Advantage plans)

This app offers guided exercise routines made for older adults, everything from chair exercises to walking programs and light strength training. You can customize your workouts based on your ability level and track your progress as you go.



TIP: Start with one app at a time. Once it becomes part of your routine, you can add another if it helps. The goal isn't perfection—it's progress.

Support and Prevention

You don't have to manage diabetes on your own. Staying healthy takes a team effort, and your family and community are all part of that team. When everyone works together, you're more likely to stay well, avoid complications, and enjoy a better quality of life.

Whole-Person Care

Managing diabetes isn't just about numbers on a chart; it's about your whole life. Your care team focuses on your overall well-being, not just your blood sugar.

- Your doctor helps monitor your health and adjust your treatment plan as needed
- You play the most important role by sharing how you feel and what's working for you
- Center support staff and social workers provide education, help with medication or transportation questions, and connect you with community support

When your medical and support teams work together, they can help you live longer, stay active, and feel your best.

Community Support and Resources

If you ever need extra help with food, transportation, or connection, there are programs available in most communities:

- **Meals on Wheels** delivers nutritious meals to older adults at home
- **Local senior or community centers** often host social activities, wellness programs, and low-cost meals
- Many **Farmers Markets** accept nutrition vouchers or SNAP benefits for fresh produce
- **SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)** provides funds to help pay for groceries. You can apply online or through your local social services office
- Through the **Eldercare Locator**, you can find nearby services and support by visiting eldercare.acl.gov or calling **1-800-677-1116**

These programs make it easier to eat well, stay active, and stay connected, which are key parts of preventing diabetes complications and maintaining overall health.

You're Not Alone

Living with diabetes is a journey, and you don't have to walk it alone. The choices you make each day matter, but having the right care team by your side makes all the difference.

Your doctor and care team are here to help you stay on track, answer questions, and adjust your care plan as your needs change. Seeing your doctor often helps catch small issues before they become bigger ones and keeps you feeling your best.

Whether it's understanding your medications, planning healthy meals, or managing your stress, there's always support available. You deserve care that helps you live well—not just today, but for years to come.



Take the Next Step Toward Better Health

- Talk to your doctor today about ways to stay on track with your diabetes care
- Ask about regular check-ins to help you reach your goals and catch changes early
- Visit **[jencaremed.com](https://www.jencaremed.com)** or call **(855) 845-9333** to learn more about how our care teams can support you

Every step you take, no matter how small, is a step toward a healthier you. With the right care, support, and habits, living well with diabetes isn't just possible—it's within reach.



JenCare Senior
Medical Center