



DIABETES AND YOUR FAMILY

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Diabetes is truly a family affair. Since type 2 diabetes tends to run in families, your children are at a higher level of risk for developing diabetes. Although some people think that diabetes skips a generation or that you only get diabetes from your mother (or your father), those beliefs are not true. Because you share the same genes with your brothers and sisters, they have the same level of risk that you do.

The Diabetes Prevention Program, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, showed that people who are at risk can prevent or delay diabetes by losing a modest amount of weight (7–10% of their total weight) and being moderately active (30 minutes of walking five days a week). Let your children and other family members know about their risk and the steps they can take to prevent diabetes. You will be helping them to live a longer and healthier life.

Besides knowing about the risk, what you tell your family members depends on how much time you spend together and how actively involved they are in your daily life. It also depends on how close they live to you and how you get along. Thinking about the type of help you have given each other over the years will give you an idea about how you can help each other prevent and care for diabetes. For most people, this means they will tell different family members different things.

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HOW YOUR FAMILY CAN HELP YOU

Your family members may be able to help you with the day-to-day work of caring for diabetes. For example, they may be able to drive you to appointments, the pharmacy or help you manage your insulin and blood glucose monitoring. Even when you do not need help with these things, having someone else who knows about your care can be a real plus in an emergency.

Your family members can also help by offering support. Living with diabetes is hard, and you probably have many feelings about your condition. For most people, these feelings are present throughout their lifetime with diabetes. Your family members can offer emotional support by listening and helping you find the strength you need when the going gets tough.

Your family members also can support your efforts to make changes. For example, they can walk with you, not eat tempting foods in front of you or bring food that fits with your eating and weight goals to family events. They also can notice all of the positive changes you have made.

To get the help you need, let them know how they can best support you and your efforts. They can't know what you need if you don't tell them.

HOW YOU CAN HELP YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS

The things you do to care for your diabetes also will help your family members lower their risk for diabetes. Instead of nagging them about exercise and weight loss, suggest you exercise together and offer healthier food at family events. Most important, you can be a source of motivation for your family. Nothing helps you stay on track more than being an inspiration for others.

why talk?

Because of their risk, your family members need to know about your diabetes for two reasons:

1
So they can be aware of the symptoms and have their blood glucose levels checked.

2
So they can take steps to prevent diabetes.