Getting started

Managing diabetes isn’t easy. There are lots of things to learn and many pieces to juggle. Most people have to change some of the things they’ve done in the past. These changes can be a little easier with the help and support of your health care team and your friends and family. Change can also seem easier by taking one step at a time.

- **Step 1**: Learn about diabetes
- **Step 2**: Set goals
- **Step 3**: Practice your new skills
- **Step 4**: Keep records
- **Step 5**: Take charge of your plan
- **Step 6**: Stay on track

**Step 1: Learn about diabetes**

Find out as much as you can about diabetes and good self-management. Good self-management means knowing and controlling your **ABCs** – A1C (blood sugar levels), Blood pressure, and Cholesterol. You can get better control of your **ABCs** if you:

- Make healthy food choices
- Stay physically active
- Take your medicines
- Test your blood sugar
- Get to a healthy weight
- Don’t use tobacco

**Step 2: Set goals**

Your health care team will help you set goals for good diabetes self-management. Your first goal might be to keep your blood sugar at a certain level, get more physical activity, or eat more fruits and vegetables. Or, you might want to quit smoking, lower your cholesterol, or lose 5 pounds.

After you reach your goal, work with your health care team to set new goals and stay on track.

**Step 3: Practice your new skills**

The only way you can become good at something is by doing it. Managing your diabetes is no different. You learn by doing. This means trying things out to see what works and what doesn’t. It’s okay to make mistakes along the way. By trying different things and making mistakes, you’ll learn what works best for you.
Many people find it helpful to talk to other people with diabetes to find out what they do when they have a problem. You can find out, for example, what others do to make better food choices during the holidays or how they fit exercise into a busy day. Ask your health care team about joining a support group or taking a workshop for people with diabetes.

**Step 4: Keep records**
The best way to find out what works and what doesn’t is to keep track of what you do, when you do it, and what happens afterward. Your daily records can help you make choices about how to manage your food, your medicines, and your activity.

It’s also a good idea to keep a record of your medical appointments and tests. That way you’ll know when your next appointment or lab is due, and be able to track how well you’re managing your diabetes over time.

**Step 5: Take charge**
After you’ve practiced your skills and kept track of what works and what doesn’t, you’ll be ready to take charge of your diabetes plan and reach your ABC goals. Your health care team is here to offer advice when you need it and help you stay on track. But you’re in charge of managing your diabetes every day. When you know more about what works for you, you can set goals and make decisions about how to meet those goals.

**Step 6: Stay on track**
Your health care team will order labs to keep track of how well your diabetes plan is working. You might get some labs as often as every 3 to 6 months. Other labs you’ll get only once a year, or less.

Plan to see your doctor every 6 to 12 months. Together, you will review your blood sugar readings and the results of your labs and tests. If needed, your doctor will work with you to make changes in your treatment plan to help you get better control.

Between doctor appointments, you can e-mail your health care team or make an appointment to see your diabetes nurse or a registered dietitian. Your team can help you stay on track and reach your healthy eating and physical activity goals. If you have any questions about your medicines, talk to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

**My care team:**

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For more information about diabetes and other health topics, visit the Health and Wellness Resources section on the Group Health website at www.ghc.org