

Diabetes - Commonly Asked Questions

This guide is designed to help case managers provide answers to common questions they may hear from clients about the chronic condition diabetes. It is helpful for case managers to keep this guide where they can refer to it quickly when they get questions from clients.

What do I need to know about diabetes?

What is diabetes?

A disease that disrupts the way your body uses sugar (glucose).

Is it called by other names?

You may also hear it called diabetes mellitus. It is frequently abbreviated DM. There are two types:

- Type 1 (usually beginning in childhood) – the body stops making insulin.
- Type 2 (usually beginning in adulthood) – the body makes insulin but stops responding normally to it. 90% of people with diabetes have Type 2.

Why is elevated blood sugar bad?

Elevated blood sugar causes severe damage to blood vessels, kidneys, nerves, and eyes over time. It raises risk for heart attack and stroke. Getting it under control can reduce the risk of death by heart attack or stroke.

What causes diabetes?

It is mostly related to unhealthy weights. But it can also run in families.

Can diabetes be prevented?

Yes – most effectively by controlling weight and by being active.

Does diabetes have symptoms? Usually not at first, but if blood sugar is high, it can cause intense thirst, blurry vision, and needing to urinate often.

How is diabetes diagnosed?

It is screened for in primary care clinics, and increasingly in behavioral health clinics, usually by use of blood tests such as HbA1c, pronounced “hemoglobin A one C.” These are usually checked every 3 to 12 months, as the diabetes is monitored by the treatment team.



Is it important to know the numbers for these screening tests?

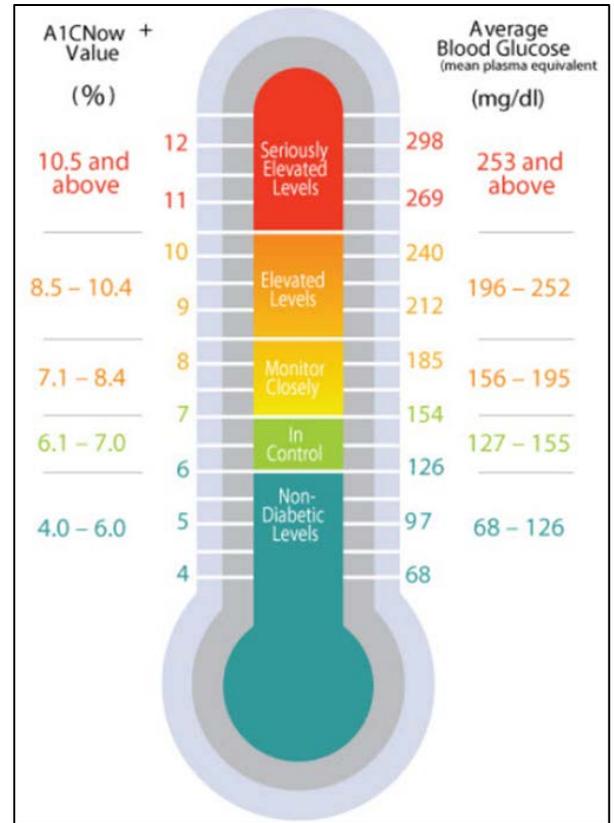
Yes – people with diabetes will check their blood sugar daily or more often at home with the use of an instrument called a glucometer. This helps check how treatment is working, or if it needs adjusting. You will be asked to bring a record of these measurements to medical appointments.

How is diabetes treated?

There is no cure, but medications such as metformin and insulin, as well as healthy eating and attempts to maintain a healthy weight, can control blood sugar levels, and limit the damaging effects on organs. You should expect your primary care provide to monitor you for complications of diabetes involving your eyes, nerves, and other organs.

What is insulin?

Insulin is a medicine that lowers a person's blood sugar level. People who use insulin might use it as a second medicine, or as their only medicine. It usually comes in the form of a shot that people give themselves.



So, I have diabetes - what do I do now?

What can I do to manage my diabetes?

- Work together with your team and your primary care provider to:
 - Measure and keep track of your blood sugar
 - Use your medication regularly and share with your team how you think it is going
 - Work with your case manager on healthy eating
- People with diabetes who quit smoking can reduce their risks.
- Get some exercise every day, like walking - even a little is better than nothing!
- Most people will benefit from working with a diabetes educator, especially soon after diagnosis, when you are learning how to care for diabetes. Your primary care provider can arrange this.





Can psychiatric medications make diabetes worse?

Yes – sometimes it will be possible to use medications that cause less weight gain and less risk of diabetes.

Can medications for diabetes cause side effects?

Yes – most importantly, blood sugar can be reduced to too low a level. You might experience the following symptoms: fatigue, pale skin, shakiness, anxiety, sweating, confusion, or abnormal behavior, such as the inability to complete routine tasks.

What should I do if I experience side effects of low blood sugar?

Eat something and then contact your case manager or health care provider – you may need to have your medication adjusted to keep this from happening again.

Where can I read more about diabetes?

- American Heart Association: <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/diabetes/about-diabetes>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetestv/managing-diabetes.html>
- American Diabetes Association (ADA): <https://www.diabetes.org>
- MedlinePlus: <https://medlineplus.gov/diabetes.html>
- Resources for Integrated Care, *Type 2 Diabetes and Serious Mental Illness: A Tip Sheet for Navigators*:
https://www.resourcesforintegratedcare.com/behavioral_health/navigation_services/tip_sheet/diabetes

