



Diabetes Mellitus Discharge Information

What is diabetes mellitus?

Having diabetes means that there is too much sugar (glucose) in your blood. When you eat food, your body breaks down much of the food into glucose. Your blood carries the glucose to the cells of your body for energy. Your body uses insulin to help move the glucose from the bloodstream into the cells. When your body does not make enough insulin, or has trouble using insulin, glucose cannot get into your cells. The glucose level in your blood goes up. Too much glucose in your blood (also called hyperglycemia or high blood sugar) can cause many problems.

There are 3 common types of diabetes: type 1, type 2, gestational, and a related condition called prediabetes.

Type 1 diabetes is when you have no insulin. Your body just stops making it. This usually happens in childhood or young adulthood. The cause is not yet understood. Type 1 diabetes requires taking insulin the rest of your life.

Type 2 diabetes is when you cannot use your own insulin. People are at higher risk for type 2 diabetes if they are of certain race (it's more prevalent among African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans), have a family history, get little physical activity, are overweight, or eat a high-calorie diet.

Gestational diabetes is when a woman has high blood sugar levels during pregnancy. Diagnosis and treatment is very important. The mother can have problems from high blood sugar, such as high blood pressure. The baby can have problems, such as being born too early.

Prediabetes is a term used for people whose blood sugar level is above normal but not yet high enough to be called diabetes. People who have prediabetes are at high risk of getting diabetes. These people need to lower their risk by eating healthy and increasing their activity.

All of these types of diabetes, and prediabetes, have one thing in common: blood sugar levels that are too high if not treated.

How can I take care of myself when I go home?

How long it takes to get better depends on how well you respond to treatment, your overall health, and any complications you may have. Having diabetes can put you at a higher risk for other illnesses, including heart disease, nerve damage, and certain infections. However, these illnesses can be delayed or even prevented by taking good care of yourself.

Management

- Know when and how to test your blood sugar. Keep a log of your blood sugar measurements.
- Your provider will give you a list of your medicines when you leave the hospital.
 - Know your medicines. Know what they look like, how much you should take each time, how often you should take them, and why you take each one.
 - Take your medicines exactly as your provider tells you to.
 - Carry a list of your medicines in your wallet or purse. Include any nonprescription medicines and supplements on the list.
- Your provider may prescribe medicines to:
 - Keep your blood sugar controlled
 - Treat other medical problems that may have been caused by or made worse because of diabetes.
 - Treat pain
 - Treat or prevent an infection
 - Prevent side effects, such as nausea or constipation, from other treatments.
- Ask your healthcare provider about the symptoms and causes of low blood sugar and what to do when you have low blood sugar. Carry some form of sugar at all times, so you can treat low blood sugar quickly.

Appointments

- Follow your provider's recommendations for follow-up visits and routine tests.
- Talk to your provider about the following tests:
 - A hemoglobin A1c test to check your average blood sugar control over the past 3 months. This is the best way to see if you are keeping your diabetes under control.
 - Regular blood pressure and cholesterol screenings. Maintaining good control of your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol will help prevent heart attacks and strokes.
 - A yearly dilated eye exam by an eye doctor. Women with diabetes who become pregnant should have their eyes checked each trimester because diabetic eye problems can worsen quickly during pregnancy.
 - A yearly foot exam by a healthcare provider to check for foot problems. You should also be checking your feet at home each day for red skin areas and open sores.
 - Yearly urine and blood tests to check how well your kidneys are working.
- Talk with your provider about any questions or fears you have.

Diet, Exercise, and Other Lifestyle Changes

- Follow the treatment plan your healthcare provider prescribes.

- Learn about diabetes and its complications so you can make the correct decisions to control your blood sugar levels. Talk to your healthcare provider about how you can learn all you need to know. You can also check with the local American Diabetes Association chapter, hospital, or health department about classes in your area or diabetes educators who can help you.
- You will probably need to make changes in some of the foods you eat. Ask your provider about the benefits of talking to a dietician to learn what you need in a healthy diet.
- Ask your healthcare provider if there are any foods or medicines you should avoid.
- Drink enough fluids to keep your urine light yellow in color, unless you are told to limit fluids.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink. It can cause low blood sugar as well as worsen nervous system problems caused by diabetes.
- Lose weight if you need to and keep a healthy weight.
- Exercise as your provider recommends.
- When you increase your activity, check your blood sugars more often. You may need to eat more or decrease the insulin you are taking. This will help prevent low blood sugar.
- Follow activity restrictions, such as not driving or operating machinery, as recommended by your healthcare provider or pharmacist, especially if you are taking pain medicines.
- Do not smoke.
- Be prepared for illness by knowing what to do when you get sick. Diabetes is harder to control when you are sick. Blood sugar can get very high during an illness and become a medical emergency. Your healthcare provider will work with you to develop a sick-day plan just for you.
- It is important to try to prevent infection. People who have diabetes are at risk for infection. If you are diabetic and have an infection, your blood sugar often rises above your usual levels.
- Learn how to do proper skin and foot care every day.
 - Look for injuries on the skin of your feet and lower legs daily.
 - Wear comfortable, well-fitting shoes to help prevent foot injury.
 - Break in new shoes gradually.
 - Ask your provider about how to trim your toenails properly.
- Carry an ID (such as a card or bracelet) that says you have diabetes, in case of an emergency.
- It's good for your family to also learn about diabetes. Make sure your family members know what to do if your sugar is too high or too low.

- Find ways to make your life less stressful.
- Having diabetes or complications of diabetes can be scary or depressing. You may wish to talk with a therapist about your feelings.

Call your healthcare provider if you have new or worsening:

- Very low or very high blood sugar that you cannot control with your usual treatments
- Increased urination or trouble emptying the bladder
- Increased thirst and dry mouth
- Increased appetite or loss of appetite
- Weight loss more than your healthcare provider recommends in any month
- Fast or irregular heartbeat
- Tiredness
- Fruity odor to breath
- Change in vision, such as double vision, blurred vision, or trouble seeing out of one or both eyes
- Floaters, which are black spots or cobweb-like shapes in your vision
- Numbness in your feet or hands
- Redness, bumps, blisters, or sores on your skin
- Infection that does not go away or frequent infection