

Overview

Good medical care is important to everyone, but it is especially important to those with diabetes. Clinical studies have shown that high blood glucose levels play a large part in many serious complications of diabetes. Good care can help avoid as many complications as possible.

What is “good” care?

Guidelines provided by the American Diabetes Association give health care providers the most current diabetes management information on a day-to-day basis. These guidelines also let you know what to expect from your doctor; giving you the power to be well informed. Good care of diabetes includes a team approach. Your health care team may include experts in other areas such as a diabetes educator, dietitian, an ophthalmologist, podiatrist, dentist, or a nurse.

Important Things to Remember

You are the captain of your team because you know more about yourself than anyone. Your role is vital in the daily care of your diabetes. You must follow the plan of care that you and your team have chosen. Report the results of your care to your team. You must help in fine-tuning your plan of care with your team. Your health care team is there to help you understand diabetes and make diabetes care a normal part of your life.

The purpose of your plan of care is to bring your blood glucose levels as close to the normal level as is safely possible. Most parts of the plan (measuring your blood glucose levels, taking insulin or prescribed medicine, exercising, eating according to your plan) assist you in achieving good blood glucose control.

How Can Your Doctor Help?

Your *first visit* to your doctor should include the following:

- Complete medical history including:
 - Information on previous or current medical conditions and treatments
 - How and when you were diagnosed with diabetes
 - Current diabetes plan of treatment
 - What medicines you are taking
 - Results of previous lab tests
 - Any complications from diabetes
 - Any factors that increase your risk for heart disease such as smoking, alcohol use, high blood pressure, high blood fats, poor eating and exercise habits, and family members with heart disease
 - Anyone else in your family who has diabetes
- Complete physical examination
- Blood and urine tests to check:
 - Your blood glucose level

- Your A1C
- Blood fat levels
- Urine protein and creatinine levels
- Other tests determined by your age, symptoms, complications, or other medical conditions you may have
- A plan for your diabetes management including:
 - A list of both short and long-term goals for your diabetes care
 - Referrals to specialists if needed
 - When to call your doctor and when to schedule your next exam
 - Teaching sessions for learning how and when to check you blood glucose, record keeping, managing high and low blood glucose episodes, and what to do on sick days, or days away from home
 - A list of the medicine you will use for your diabetes and other conditions
 - A list of life changes you may need to make to improve your health, such as stopping smoking, exercising more, etc.
 - Birth control and pre-pregnancy planning, if appropriate

Your plan of care must consider your personal needs such as your work/school schedule, your food likes/dislikes, cultural background, your normal physical activity, and other medical conditions you have. Your care plan will not be the same as everyone else's. It is important for you to be actively involved in the design of your plan of care.

Future visits will be determined by your doctor based on your needs. Visits are usually scheduled 2-4 times per year depending on your type of diabetes and any complications you may have. All specialists should send a report to your primary doctor with their findings, lab results, and specific recommendations.

In addition to regular check-ups, your doctors should do the following tests at least once a year:

- Dilated eye exam
- Thorough foot exam
- Blood fat test called a lipid profile (this is done every two years if your levels are low)
- Blood test and a urine test to check your kidneys (if you have kidney disease, your doctor will do other tests)

Frequent and honest communication with each member of your health care team is essential in the overall effectiveness of diabetes management. It will promote good health and assist in the avoidance of diabetes complications.

Quiz

1. Your first visit to your doctor should include all of the following except:
 - a) A complete physical examination
 - b) A complete medical history
 - c) ACT scan
 - d) Blood and urine tests
 - e) A plan for your diabetes management
2. Follow-up appointments with your doctor are usually scheduled _____ to _____ times per year.
3. True or False: A hemoglobin A1c test should be done only once a year.

Answers: 1) c, 2) 2 to 4, 3) False