

# Helping Your Teen Manage Their Diabetes:

## A Guide for Parents

---

Raising a teen with diabetes has unique challenges. It is natural to feel anxious or stressed out about your teen's well-being, even if you want to encourage them to be more independent. Helping your teen manage their diabetes can make you and your teen feel as if you are turning into the "diabetes police;" constantly worried about their wellness and asking about their food choices and blood sugar levels. The good news is you are not alone; many families going through adolescent diabetes confront similar challenges.

---

**Here are some tips for how you can help your teen manage their diabetes:**

- **Talk to each other, and validate your teen's feelings and frustrations.** Diabetes is hard work, and it can feel to your teen as if diabetes is taking over their life. Letting your teen know that you understand these feelings can help them see that you are on their side.
- **Help your teen create a management plan and determine with them a level of involvement with which you can both be satisfied.**
- **Create a plan for communication, and stick with it.** Whether it is daily updates or weekly check-ins, create a plan together for how and when your teen will tell you about their diabetes management.
- **Let your teen know that you are open to change.** Making your own decisions is a huge part of independence, so your teen may want to change the diabetes management routine for no real reason other than to try something different. Encourage that change rather than fighting against it.
- **Try to focus less on the numbers and more on behavior,** and thank your teen when they complete activities such as checking their blood sugar – even if the number is out of range. Remember that sometimes the numbers may be outside of your teen's control.
- **Help your teen take small steps toward independence.** Too much independence all at once can be unsettling for you and confusing for your teen. Instead, start small with a single action (like letting your teen be in charge of carb counting one day out of the week) and see how the change goes before adding another step.
- **Try not to strive for perfection;** it is hard to achieve in most areas of life. Most of the time, good enough is just fine.
- **Find other parents of teens with diabetes so you can talk and share ideas for getting through this unique time.** Your teen is navigating the difficult road to new adulthood, and although it is challenging for you, the stakes are even higher for your teen. If there are no support groups in your area, look to the internet or create your own group.

Use the worksheet attached to your teen's flyer to create some compromises and action steps.

---

### To Learn More

- Diabetes Social Worker
- 
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
  - [seattlechildrens.org/patient-education](https://seattlechildrens.org/patient-education)

### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.



**Seattle Children's**  
HOSPITAL • RESEARCH • FOUNDATION

Seattle Children's offers free interpreter services for patients, family members and legal representatives who are deaf or hard of hearing or speak a language other than English. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201. This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your healthcare provider.

© 2024 Seattle Children's, Seattle, Washington. All rights reserved.

10/24  
PE2807