

Family and Friends Can Help



Family and friends of persons with diabetes should know:

1. Support is very important to living successfully with type 2 diabetes.
2. The different types of support that can be provided to their loved one.

Recommended Conversation

Family and friends of a person living with diabetes should be made well aware of the importance of support to the success of their loved one living successfully with diabetes. They have important roles to play in both initial and sustained behavior change.

Routine medical care and consistent diabetes self-management behavior (DSMB) are foundational to the management of diabetes. In both cases, consistency is the key. The life-long practices of receiving medical care and performing self-management behaviors are required. Both typically require behavior change. Initial behavior change is hard enough. Sustaining the change for life is far more difficult.

Support can be presented as “reaching out” and “joining in.” Families and friends should be encouraged to reach out to their loved one by offering them encouragement, assistance and reinforcement. Encouragement is an act intended to motivate the person to perform a behavior, e.g., heartening or cheering words, incentives, behavioral contracting. Assistance is a form of help and aid extended to the person, e.g., assisting the person with making medical appointments, eliminating undesirable foods from the house, listening to them as they vent their frustrations. Reinforcement is intended to increase the probability the person will continue to do the behavior: compliments, congratulations, material rewards. Emphasize the loving and friendly nature of providing support.

Family and friends should be strongly encouraged, whenever possible, to “join in” with the loved one. Having a “partner” can make living with diabetes so much easier. They can join forces to confront diabetes, whether it be learning together about diabetes or actually performing self-management behaviors. Most diabetes self-management behaviors are just healthy behaviors that anyone can benefit by. Express the win-win nature of joining in.

Consider alerting immediate family members of their increased risk for diabetes. Encourage that they ask their medical providers if they should be tested. Stress the importance of early diagnosis and treatment to prevent serious complications.

Resources

Handout: *Diabetes: Helping a Family Member Who Has Diabetes* (Developed by American Academy of Family Physicians in cooperation with American Diabetes Association).
<http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/common/diabetes/living/353.html>.
Handout uses a question-answer format to encourage family to become helpful to the person with diabetes.

Brochure: *Tips for Helping a Person with Diabetes: How You Can Help Your Loved One with Diabetes* (National Diabetes Education Program).
www.ndep.nih.gov/diabetes/pubs/TipsHelping_Eng.pdf
Brochure offers 7 valuable tips to help a person immediately get started to help a loved one with diabetes.