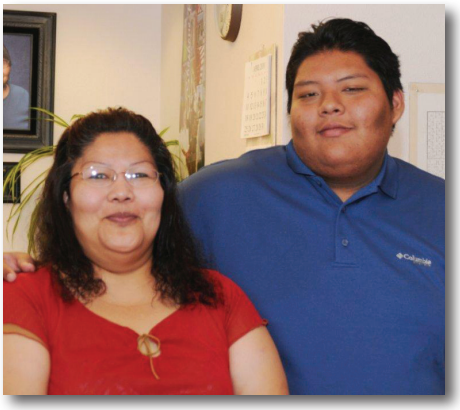
Living a Balanced Life with Diabetes:

Tips for American Indian/Alaska Native Teens

National Diabetes Education Program



Diabetes and You

Diabetes is very common among American Indians and Alaska Natives. Sometimes it may seem like you are the only person with diabetes, but there are other teens like you who also have diabetes.

Most of the time, living with diabetes is not a problem, you just deal with it. But, sometimes having diabetes can be tough! You may just want it to go away. Maybe diabetes isn't even the biggest issue you're dealing with, but it can make everything seem harder sometimes.

Diabetes can be hard to deal with every day. Sometimes, you may feel sad, angry, alone, or different.

Do you ever…

- Think you're the only one who feels down about having diabetes?
- Wonder why you got diabetes?
- Blame yourself or your family for your diabetes?

All of these feelings are normal. Everyone feels down sometimes, especially when they have a lot of stress and challenges. But, if you notice that you're feeling down most of the time, then it's important to reach out to others to get help.

Feel good about yourself. Talk to your friends, family, the elders in your tribe, and your health care team about how it feels to have diabetes

Check This Out

Have you noticed any of the following changes in yourself?

- ❑ Getting poor grades in school
- ❑ Having little to no interest in being with friends or doing activities you enjoy
- ❑ Feeling sad or hopeless
- ❑ Feeling tired most of the time
- ❑ Feeling angry more often
- ❑ Having low self-esteem or guilt
- ❑ Finding it hard to concentrate
- ❑ Eating too much or too little
- ❑ Sleeping too much or too little
- ❑ Using drugs or alcohol
- ❑ Having thoughts about suicide

If you checked any of these items, talk to your health care team (diabetes educator, dietitian, doctor, nurse, psychologist, or social worker), your spiritual counselor, your parents, or some other adult you trust about how you've been feeling. They can help you to get the support you need.

If you have been thinking about hurting or killing yourself, get help. Tell someone. You can get support from the Native Youth Crisis Hotline at **1-877-209-1266,** the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at **1-800-273-8255,** or by visiting **www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org.**

Take Steps to Feel Better

- Make a list of your strengths. Write down some of the things that you do well and things that make you feel good about yourself.
- Ask the elders for help. Tell the elders how you've been feeling. They can help you think about new ways to deal with diabetes and things that are bothering you.
- Do something nice for another person. Helping someone in need can make you feel better. Volunteer in your community.
- Find a new hobby or do something you once enjoyed. Staying busy can help you focus on positive things. Join a friend and check out local events near you.
- Record a video of what matters to you. Record your life story. Let others know some things about you and what you enjoy doing.
- Join a support group for teens with diabetes. By joining a new group, you may meet new people and learn new ways to deal with diabetes and other life issues.
- Reduce stress. Be active. Play hard. Shoot hoops, ride a bike, dance, or take a nature walk. Being active can help you relax, lower stress, and improve how you feel about yourself.
- Eat healthy foods. Good food choices, such as fruits and vegetables, natural peanut butter, low-fat cheese, or nonfat or low-fat milk, can help you take care of your body and control your diabetes.

Sometimes having diabetes can be tough! Talk to your health care team and your friends. Writing your feelings about diabetes in a journal can also help.

Learn More about Diabetes and Taking Care of Yourself

National Diabetes Education Program
Free materials for teens with diabetes
www.YourDiabetesInfo.org
*search the word "teens" to find tip sheets for teens on the NDEP website
1-888-693-NDEP (6337)

Gen 7 magazine
A magazine about American Indian/Alaska Native teens and how they manage diabetes
http://www.ihs.gov/MedicalPrograms/Diabetes/index.cfm?module=resourcesGen7

Bam! Body and Mind
Ten tips to help teens keep their cool
www.bam.gov
www.bam.gov/sub_yourlife/yourlife_feelingfrazzled.html

Children with Diabetes
For pen pals and more for kids and families with diabetes
www.childrenwithdiabetes.com

Diabetes Camps
Camps for young people with diabetes
www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/parents-and-kids/ada-camps/

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International
For pen pals and help to manage diabetes
www.jdrf.org
1-800-223-1138

National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse
For more information about diabetes
www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov
1-800-860-8747

Mental Health America
For tips on dealing with depression in teens
http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/information/get-info/depression/depression-in-teens
1-800-969-6642

Learn More about Being Active

Just Move It: It's Up to You
To increase physical activity among American Indians and Alaska Natives
http://justmoveit.org/

Body Works
For healthy teens and strong families
www.womenshealth.gov/bodyworks/index.cfm

Walk 4 Life
Gives information on walking and being active
www.walk4life.com

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www.YourDiabetesInfo.org or 1-888-693-NDEP (6337), TTY: 1-866-569-1162

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