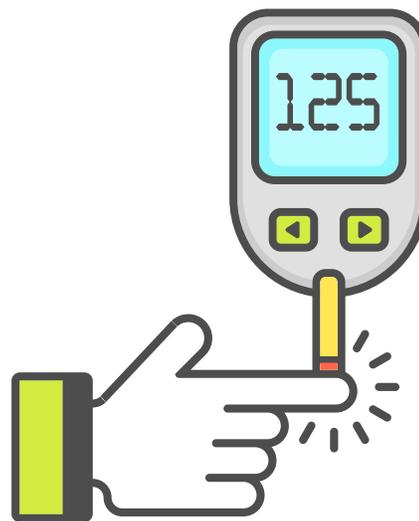


# How to Help a Loved One With **Diabetes** When You Live Far Apart

Managing diabetes is not easy, whether a person has just been diagnosed or has been living with diabetes for many years. Family support can be helpful in managing everyday tasks or dealing with changes in care over time. But if you live an hour or more from your loved one with diabetes, you may worry about how you can help. Being prepared with the right information can help you provide support, even from a distance. This short guide offers tips that can help.



## Learn about diabetes.

Learning about diabetes can help you understand what is going on, know what to expect, prevent emergencies, and help your loved one manage their health care. Learning about diabetes can also make talking with the doctor easier.

- Learn as much as you can about your loved one's diabetes medicines, supplies, and equipment, including test strips and blood sugar monitors. You can learn more about managing diabetes from the National Diabetes Education Program and other groups listed in the [Resources](#) section of this guide.
- Ask your loved one to teach you about how they are managing diabetes and what kinds of support they may need. Do they just need someone to check on them now and then? Do they need people to take them to appointments or help make medical and financial decisions?



**National Diabetes Education Program**

A program of the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



## Gather information and keep it in one place.

Gather important information about your loved one's health care, and keep it up-to-date. Put it in a place that is easy for your loved one or a caregiver to find. Keep copies for yourself. Here are the kinds of information you should collect:

- With your loved one's consent, make sure that at least one family member or close friend gets written permission to receive medical and financial information from the doctor or hospital. If possible, choose one person to talk with all health care providers.
- Write down the following medical information (you can use the [Important Contacts and Medical Information](#) form in this guide):
  - ▲ Names and phone numbers of your loved one's care team.
  - ▲ Names and doses of your loved one's medicines.
  - ▲ Names and phone numbers of emergency contacts.
- Make sure your loved one or a caregiver knows how to contact you (or the emergency contact) in an emergency, but stress that they should call 911 first.
- Create a list of resources in your loved one's community (see [Where to Find Resources for Your Loved One](#)). Think about:
  - ▲ **Social support:** Check with your loved one's health care provider for support groups, social services, and other resources in the community.
  - ▲ **Financial support:** Check for community discount programs for medicines, blood sugar monitors, diabetes education, nutrition assessment, and counseling.
  - ▲ **Practical support:** Ask your loved one's health care providers or diabetes educator if there is someone who can help them get supplies and learn to use equipment, if needed. Caregivers can also learn to use equipment.

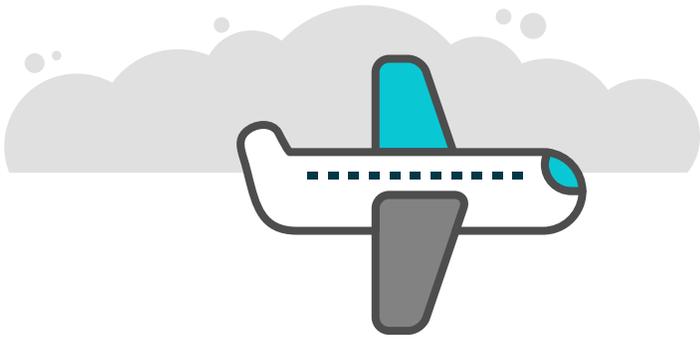


## Where to Find Resources for Your Loved One

Different kinds of community organizations can help with different kinds of resources, like meal planning, diabetes care, diabetes camps for children, housekeeping, or emotional support. Here are some places to go for help:

- Faith communities, if your loved one is a member.
- Local diabetes groups, senior centers, and other community groups that provide support services (see the [Resources](#) section of this guide).
- Local hospitals. Call nearby hospitals, and ask for their diabetes clinic and their dietician services. Their diabetes clinic may have a list of local support services.
- Local pharmacies. Many pharmacies offer individual and group diabetes counseling.
- Your loved one's health insurance company or Medicare. Ask what diabetes education and support services are covered. For example, Medicare Part B covers a wide range of diabetes education and training.
- State health and social services. Look for information on the state government website or in the phone book. Ask about community programs for children, seniors, and people with disabilities.

Your loved one may need a referral from a health care provider to get more help from some of these organizations. You can work with your loved one's doctors to get them the help needed.



## Plan your visits.

When visiting your loved one, you may feel worried that there is just too much to do in the time you have. Talk with your loved one ahead of time about the kind of help they may need. You may feel less stressed if you can focus on a few important errands or chores during your visit.

- Research your company's sick and vacation time policies. Some companies allow sick leave to be used to care for a relative.
- Remember that your loved one may need help with things like home cleaning and repairs, shopping, or other tasks that are not directly related to their health.
- Check with your loved one or a caregiver to learn what medical care they may need. Do they need to see specialists, such as the foot doctor (podiatrist) or eye doctor (optometrist or ophthalmologist)? Do they need more testing supplies? This information may help you set clear, realistic goals for your visit.
- Try to set aside time with your loved one to do things that are fun and relaxing. Suggest taking a walk together. Offer to play a game of cards or a board game.

## Stay in touch.

- Ask your loved one how they are coping with diabetes and how you can help.
- With your loved one's permission, try to find people in the community—like family members, friends, or neighbors—who can visit and provide support if needed.
- Check in regularly with the people who are providing care. Find out how they are coping with caregiving and how you can help them.

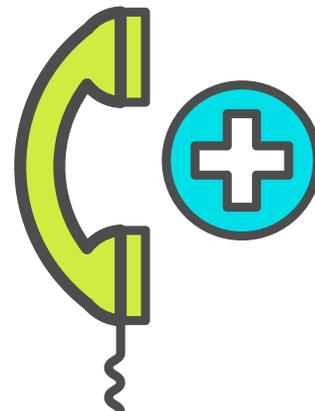
## Help your loved one reach out.

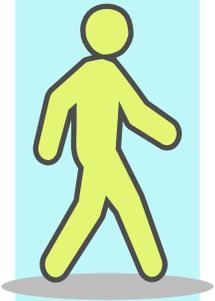
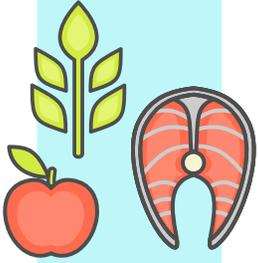
Help your loved one save phone numbers—like those for doctors, friends, and yourself—in their phone. Set up speed dial for important contacts. Such simple steps can be a lifeline.

Your loved one may feel frustrated and overwhelmed by everything they need to do to manage a chronic disease like diabetes. Let them know that these feelings are normal and that it's OK to ask for help. Encourage your loved one to take small steps to be more successful. For example:

- Talk with others in the community who have diabetes. Friends, family members, and neighbors who are also living with diabetes may be willing to listen and share their experiences.
- Go to a nearby support group. Look for a phone or online support group if it is hard to get to an in-person group.
- Find counselors or social workers in the community who can help.
- Ask a health care provider or diabetes educator where to go for help.
- If your loved one belongs to a faith community, ask the clergy or other members for support.

Make sure your loved one knows that others can help. They do not have to manage diabetes alone.





## Resources for Everyone

### [American Association of Diabetes Educators](#)

Diabetes educators and educational resources.

### [American Diabetes Association](#)

Information about diabetes prevention and treatment, nutrition, and weight loss.

### [CDC Diabetes Management](#)

General information about diabetes care.

### [CDC Emergency Resources](#)

Resources for people with diabetes who are affected by natural disasters, emergencies, and hazards.

### [Diabetes Action Network, National Federation of the Blind](#)

Information about companies and organizations that offer products and information for people with diabetes and vision problems.

### [The Joslin Diabetes Center](#)

The online library provides information about diabetes care, nutrition, medicines, and exercise.

### [Learn, Connect, Engage with the Diabetes Online Community](#)

Information on diabetes online communities.

### [National Diabetes Education Program](#)

Resources to help people who have diabetes, and their loved ones, learn to manage the condition.

### [National Family Caregivers Association](#)

Tips and guides for caregivers, a bulletin board for peer support, and lists of resources.

## Resources for Young People

### [Children With Diabetes](#)

Discussion forums for parents of children with diabetes.

### [Diabetes Camps](#)

A list of diabetes camps for children.

### [Transitions: From Pediatric to Adult Health Care](#)

General information about diabetes care.

Links to nonfederal organizations are provided solely as a service to our users. Links do not constitute an endorsement of any organization by CDC or the federal government, and none should be inferred. CDC is not responsible for the content of the individual organization web pages found at this link.

## Important Contacts and Medical Information

Use this form to keep important information in one place.

Make sure you, your loved one, and your loved one's caregivers all have copies.

Patient Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Caregiver Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_



### Diabetes Care Team Contact Information

Diabetes Care Team Member	Name, Phone Number, E-mail	Notes
Primary care provider		
Diabetes specialist (endocrinologist)		
Nurse practitioner		
Physician assistant		
Community health worker		
Diabetes educator		
Drugstore/pharmacist		
Dentist		
Eye doctor (optometrist or ophthalmologist)		
Foot doctor (podiatrist)		
Mental health provider (e.g., social worker, psychologist, psychiatrist)		
Other health care providers (e.g., dietician, nephrologist)		
Other important contacts (e.g., neighbors, relatives, clergy)		

