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November Article National Diabetes Awareness Month

Managing Diabetes: It's Not Easy, But It's Worth It

By the National Diabetes Education Program

If you have diabetes, you know the day-to-day steps needed to manage diabetes can be hard. Diabetes can lead to serious health problems, such as blindness, loss of limb, kidney failure, heart disease, and early death. Managing diabetes can be easier if you set goals and make a plan.

People who keep their A1C below 7 in the early years after they are diagnosed with diabetes have fewer problems with their eyes, nerves, and kidneys, and have fewer heart attacks later in life. Your A1C measures your blood glucose (blood sugar) over time. Most people, especially those who have just been diagnosed, should aim for an A1C of less than 7. If you have had diabetes for a long time, have other health problems, or have problems with low blood sugar, your A1C target may be higher than 7. Talk with your health care team about your blood glucose targets. Yours may be different from others.

Diabetes management is not just about your blood glucose. Keeping your blood pressure and cholesterol under control can lower your risk for heart attack and stroke as well as other diabetes problems. Take your medicines that are working to control blood pressure and cholesterol. Talk with your health care team about taking control of your blood pressure and cholesterol.

Managing diabetes isn't easy, but it's worth it. The National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) offers tips to help. The first step is to set a goal for yourself. Choose something that is important to you and that you believe you can do. Then make a plan by choosing the small steps you will take. For example, start working towards getting 30 minutes of physical activity, such as brisk walking, most days of the week. If you have not been very active in the past, start slowly and try adding a few minutes each day. Ask others for help with your plan.

NDEP has free resources that can help. For more information on managing diabetes, order a free copy of *4 Steps to Control Your Diabetes. For Life.* from the National Diabetes Education Program at www.YourDiabetesInfo.org or call 1-888-693-NDEP (6337); TTY: 1-866-569-1162.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Diabetes Education Program is jointly sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with the support of more than 200 partner organizations.

NDEP's Control Your Diabetes. For Life. campaign seeks to reach the nearly 24 million Americans with diabetes, and their families, with messages about the seriousness of diabetes, ways to control the disease, and the benefits of controlling diabetes for life.