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Diabetes Caregiver Guide

By Kyle McClure

[Here, you'll find diet and exercise tips to help your loved one successfully manage his or her condition](#)

If you're caring for someone with diabetes, you understand the importance of proper disease management. For diabetics, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) suggests a 5 to 10 percent reduction of body weight, which can result in less reliance on insulin or other medications. Here, you'll find diet and exercise tips to help your loved one successfully manage his or her condition—and avoid serious complications

Diet Tips

If the person you care for has several unhealthy eating habits, try making one major change a week. This gradual progression will help make the change easier.

Mix things up. Allowing sweets once in a while can make a diet plan livable as long as they are accounted for by reducing calories elsewhere or increasing activity. Also, make the menu interesting and diverse by incorporating fruits, vegetables, lean protein, and whole grains. Use lots of colors to make it visually appealing too.

To make meals interesting, experiment with spices and lower-calorie substitutions; for example use low-fat yogurt instead of cream.

Remove the temptation. Keep junk food out of the home.
Source: Qualityhealth.com

Choose healthy snacks and pre-packaged individual portions (e.g. apple slices with low fat cheese, baby carrots, melon and fat free cottage cheese, etc...)

Try to eliminate mindless eating in front of the TV; if eating in front of the TV is a must, place an appropriate portion in a dish and put the rest away.

Exercise Tips

The benefits of exercise for people with diabetes are well-documented. But the person you care for may resist efforts to engage in physical activity. Here are some ideas to get them off the couch.

Don't nag... encourage. If you are hounding the person in your care to exercise, they might dig their heels in and completely resist.

If they are resistant, recognize that you can't make someone do anything. Ask the person in your care why exercise is so unpleasant and how you can make it more enjoyable.

An exercise plan has a better chance of success if it includes activities the person enjoys. To make it more fun, suggest something you can do together such as taking a walk.

Place a stationary bike or other exercise equipment in front of the TV to make the activity more appealing.

Start gradually and build up, slowly striving for at least 30 minutes a day. Make sure you are checking your loved one's blood sugar to see how they are responding to the exercise.

If mobility is an issue, ask a diabetes educator about armchair exercises.

Remind the person in your care that exercise will aid weight control and improve glucose and cholesterol levels, circulation, and general well-being. It might also reduce the need for certain medications, and unlike medication, exercise in moderation has no harmful side effects.