



## Restarting your diabetes self-management in the New Year

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### A pragmatic plan for a healthier New Year

As the New Year approaches, our thoughts often turn to how we'd like to see our lives change in the coming 12 months. This often takes the form of New Year's resolutions, which are satisfying to make in the moment, but are infamous for not being kept. (In fact, 88% of people give them up within a few weeks, generally because they are unrealistic.)

If you have diabetes, you've likely made resolutions about managing your diet and blood sugar, only to see them fall by the wayside. If that's the case, you may want to try this sensible four-part plan to improve your diabetes care, one baby step at a time.

#### 1. Start with what you think

Before you make an appointment with your primary care physician/diabetes specialist, consider what you think about how you're doing with your self-management program. Get a piece of paper and jot down your thoughts: Is your diet okay, but your exercise program lacking? Are you sleeping? Are you experiencing low/high blood sugar episodes frequently? How are you managing stress?

Also, take a moment to sit quietly and experience your body. Often life gets so busy that we ignore those little aches and pains that seem to simply be a part of getting older, but may be a symptom of a larger issue.

**Make a step-by-step plan to improve your diabetes management in the new year.**

#### 2. Gather your numbers

Make an appointment with your diabetes care team as soon as possible in order to understand exactly where you stand with your diabetes and general health. Your doctor can do a few basic tests, including:

- (A) Your average blood sugar levels** from the previous three months, i.e., your hemoglobin A1C number. If your number is above 7%, ask your doctor what steps you can take to lower it.
- (B) Your weight.** Make sure to have it measured in the doctor's office.
- (C) Your cholesterol numbers.** Poorly managed diabetes will often lower "good" cholesterol (HDL) and raise "bad" cholesterol (LDL), resulting in coronary artery disease.
- (D) Your blood pressure.** People with diabetes are twice as likely to have high blood pressure than those without the disease.
- (E) Your kidney function.** High blood sugar can eventually damage your kidneys. Early kidney disease is asymptomatic, but simple urine and blood tests will catch it.

### 3. Find your focus

With your numbers and labs in hand, you have a targeted approach to managing your diabetes in the new year. So, now it's time to build your goal around that.

Let's say your A1C is above 7%. Getting it below that threshold becomes the focus of your resolution and everything you do should contribute to that goal.

**Your first priority** is to check your blood sugar more frequently – especially if you take insulin – since you need to know more about your highs and lows. Try to check it two hours after meals. Do it consistently and don't beat yourself up if your readings are not in the ideal range.

**Next, gradually adjust your diet** toward more lean proteins, berries and non-fatty nuts..

**Exercise is important**, but don't dive into a rigorous exercise program right away. Work your way into it, step by step, maybe 15 minutes of exercise a few days a week, building up to the recommended 150 minutes a week. Thirty minutes of exercise five days a week (aerobic enough that you can't really talk to your friend while doing it) can make a world of difference.

**Take your medications.** According to a recent study, almost 40% of people with diabetes simply stop taking their second-line (non-insulin) medications (such as GLP-1s) because of side effects/cost issues and don't tell their doctors about it. It's completely understandable if your meds make you feel sick or have become unaffordable, but you need to inform your doctor, so he or she can set up a new plan with you.

### 4. Pick a short time frame

**You don't want to leave your goal open-ended**, because most people will naturally tell themselves that they can't possibly keep it up for an indeterminate period. **So, pick a short time frame as a way to say to yourself, "I can do this for x amount of time, just to see what will happen."**

In the case of lowering your A1C, your doctor will want to recheck you in three months, which is a perfect amount of time to change your approach to managing your blood sugar and improving your general health. It's not forever, but it's certainly worth 90 days of your life to take these steps. You may not get below that A1C 7% mark in that period of time (or you may) but you will probably lower it. And you will almost certainly prove to yourself that the steps you resolve to take, one at a time, can bring you to a better, healthier place with your diabetes.

Sources: <https://www.mrhsomaha.com/blog/5-helpful-diabetes-goals-to-set-for-the-new-year> | <https://www.uclahealth.org/news/article/new-years-resolutions-for-diabetics> | <https://www.diabetesthyroid.clinic/10-new-years-resolutions-for-diabetics/> | <https://news.northwestern.edu/stories/2023/12/nearly-40-of-type-2-diabetes-patients-stop-taking-their-second-line-medication> | <https://southeastdiabetes.com/2025/01/managing-your-diabetes-going-into-the-new-year-a-fresh-start-for-your-health/> | <https://www.altheia.md/post/new-years-resolutions-for-diabetes> | <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/diabetes/diabetes-and-high-blood-pressure>

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