



## You, your diabetes — and the world

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Your experience with diabetes is, of course, personal to you—you learn how best to manage it with the help of your medical care team, and beyond that it really is no one else's business, right? Well, yes and no. There are some people you may want to consider telling, such as your friends and family, colleagues at work or the person you're newly in a relationship with. Here's how you can go about it, if you want to share this information.

### On the job with diabetes

Telling their employer worries a lot of people who fear they may lose their jobs. After all, people with diabetes may have certain dietary requirements or special requirements within the office itself. But the good news is that if you have diabetes, revealing that fact [could be beneficial to you](#) in a number of ways:

**You might be protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act.** which applies to private employers and labor unions with more than 15 people, as well as state and local governments. Essentially, employers can't fail to hire or promote you because of your diabetes, can't fire you for your diabetes and must provide you with "reasonable accommodations" (see box) that help you perform the basic functions of your job.

**The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides certain private and government employees with up to 12 weeks of medical leave per year** if the employee has a serious medical condition, if certain conditions are met. This can often be taken in increments—for doctor's appointments and the like—if you prefer.

**It can be a good idea to let your manager know.** If your employer hired you without knowing you have diabetes—as you do not have an obligation to reveal this during the interview process—you may want to [let your manager know](#) once you start your job. It will help you take advantage of the provisions of the laws mentioned above, of course. Plus, a good manager will understand and seek to help you, because they know it will [improve your job performance and productivity](#).

**Opening up about your diabetes at work may help you find other people within your company who can lend a helping hand in case you need one.** You may also meet co-workers who themselves have diabetes or who have family members with diabetes. It's always nice to spend five minutes out of a busy day talking to someone who gets it.

## Family and friends

A [2022 National Institute of Health \(NIH\) study](#) discusses the thought process many people go through as they decide whether or not to disclose their diabetes to those close to them. Since type 2 diabetes often arrives later in life and is “invisible” to the casual observer, people generally make the decision to [tell others in their family/friend network](#) based on a desire for support and to make family members prepared in case they need to help in an emergency. According to the NIH study, between 53 and 65% of people with type 2 diabetes discuss their illness—as well as attendant worries and stresses—with family. The support they receive when they do so is a strong indicator of future success in managing the disease properly.

## But what factors play into not disclosing?

1

One reason people do not tell others is that they are afraid of a stigma surrounding type 2 diabetes—that a person brings it on themselves by living an unhealthy lifestyle, that they are somehow to blame for their illness. If you become aware of someone in your circle who thinks this way, direct them to information that provides the full story, remembering that ultimately you have no control over the thoughts and actions of others.

2

Telling children can be another challenging area for some. For toddlers and pre-K kids, all they need to know is that your body needs certain medicine to feel better. By the time they are in middle school, most children are able to fully understand diabetes.

3

What about a new romantic relationship? As with a job interview, you have no obligation to disclose on initially meeting and, in fact, it may be better not to. As time goes on and the relationship deepens, it’s normal to divulge—how that person receives the news can be a harbinger of future success or the lack thereof.



## Reasonable Accommodations

If you are protected by the ADA, your employer may be required to help accommodate you.

The [reasonable accommodations](#) provided to people with diabetes under the Americans with Disabilities Act may include:

- Breaks to check blood glucose levels, eat a snack, take medication or go to the bathroom
- Permission to keep diabetes supplies and food nearby in a temperature-controlled environment
- Excused absences, late arrivals, early departures or use of leave time for medical appointments
- Permission to use large-screen computer monitors or other assistive devices

There may be other accommodations available to you—the American Diabetes Association has a complete [list](#).

**Sources:** <https://diabetes.org/advocacy/know-your-rights/your-rights-on-the-job> | <https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/diabetes-workplace-and-ada> | <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/hcp/employers/index.html> | <https://bhr.org/2022/03/how-to-manage-your-diabetes-in-the-office> | <https://beyondtype2.org/talking-to-your-family-about-type-2/> | <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC96723/> | <https://diabetes.org/advocacy/know-your-rights/common-reasonable-accommodations>

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