



You're the most important member
of your diabetes care team

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Most people are initially diagnosed with diabetes through routine blood work ordered by their primary care provider (PCP). After the surprise of the diagnosis wears off, the first thought for many is: **How do I manage this condition? Who can help me?**

While your primary care doctor often remains a key part of your treatment plan, they are not typically equipped to offer the specialized care many people with diabetes need. That's where your diabetes care team comes in.

An entire team?

The notion of a "team" of diabetes specialists **might seem intimidating**. But this needn't be the case. It's possible your "team" will simply include your primary care doctor and one or two health care specialists (who can be nurses or pharmacists). It may also include medical professionals like ophthalmologists and dentists that you would most likely see anyway.

When it comes to managing your diabetes, prevention is key. By **keeping your HgBA1C under 7%**—with or without the help of an endocrinologist and/or nutritionist—you can help prevent common complications like coronary artery disease (CAD) or renal disease. And, if you're effectively self-managing your diabetes, you may not need to consult many different specialists.

No matter your specific needs, a team of medical professionals can **provide guidance on living your healthiest life with diabetes**. Studies have shown that for people with type 2 diabetes, at least some form of team-based care (TBC) improves patient support, increases

diabetes education and, most importantly, **helps keep diabetes complications to a minimum**.

When should you gather a care team together?

If managing your disease seems complicated or overwhelming, it may be time to find other doctors besides your PCP to help you. **Reasons you may need to see a diabetes specialist include:**

- Standard treatment options aren't working. Specialists are there to know all the options and stay up to date on the latest research.
- If you take three or more insulin shots a day or use an insulin pump, your diabetes may need more careful monitoring.
- If you're not sure what other medical personnel or resources you need specific to your individual symptoms, a diabetes specialist can act as the gateway to a host of other medical practitioners.

Who should be on your team?

You can pick the members of your team based on your needs, which include receiving the right information and care to best manage your diabetes.

Endocrinologists specialize in treating hormone-related disorders, including diabetes. Visiting an endocrinologist tends to be the next step people take after seeing a PCP, because they are experts at insulin management and addressing the potential complications of diabetes.

A **Certified Diabetes Educator** (CDE) provides educational support to help you understand your diabetes, manage blood sugar levels, administer insulin and advise on lifestyle changes.

A **Registered Dietician/Nutritionist** can help you maintain your ideal weight by developing personalized meal plans to balance your blood sugar.

Seeing an **Ophthalmologist** or **Optometrist** for regular eye exams can help with early detection of diabetic retinopathy, cataracts or glaucoma.

A **Dentist**, since diabetes increases the risk of gum disease and other oral health problems.

A good **Pharmacist** can help you understand your medications and their dosages and side-effects, as well as provide guidance on relevant over-the-counter medications.

A **Physical Therapist** or **Exercise Physiologist** can work with you to develop an exercise plan that fits your lifestyle and helps manage your blood sugar levels.

A **Podiatrist**, since people with diabetes are at an increased risk for foot problems caused by poor circulation, as well as diabetic neuropathy.

A **Neurologist**, if you are experiencing any kind of neuropathy as a complication of diabetes.

People with diabetes are at a greater risk of coronary artery disease (CAD) and may need to visit a **Cardiologist** to manage this condition.

As renal disease is a potential complication of diabetes, you may also need the support of a **Nephrologist**.

Don't forget your mental health

Diabetes can be challenging to manage emotionally on top of an already-busy life, hence the term "diabetes stress." **Don't try to tough it out alone.** Aside from getting support from friends and family, see a mental health professional if you find yourself becoming anxious or depressed. A good therapist can help you deal with the day-to-day aspects of diabetes as well as more serious emotional issues.



Sources: | <https://diabetes.org/health-wellness/diabetes-and-your-health/your-healthcare-team> | <https://healthcare.utah.edu/diabetes/when-should-you-see-diabetes-specialist#-text=Endocrinologists%20often%20work%20as%20a%20very%20complicated%20problem%20to%20manage> | <https://www.healthline.com/health/diabetes-doctors> | <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/317426> | <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7373227/> | <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7054922/> | <https://health.usnews.com/conditions/diabetes/doctors-for-diabetes> | <https://www.usmed.com/blog/diabetessupportgroups/>

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