

Diabetes



Tips for Diabetes Caregivers

A diabetes diagnosis can be overwhelming. As caregivers, you want to support your loved ones and help them enjoy the healthiest lives possible. But what is the best way to do that? Healthcare providers offer the following tips to learn what is helpful and what to avoid.

- **Educate yourself.** Your first and best step in becoming an ally for your loved one is to arm yourself with education. Learn the facts about diabetes, and ask your healthcare provider where you can find more information and support.
- **Give yourself and your loved one time to digest the information.** Don't rush your loved one (or yourself) from mourning to acceptance of a diabetes diagnosis. You can learn things and make changes step by step, to avoid overhauling your lives based on a loved one's diabetes.
- **Encourage self-care, but don't be a pest.** There is a fine line between checking in on someone's well-being and nagging. Explain what you would appreciate your loved one doing. Role-play your requests with your diabetes care team to make sure your approach will be well-received.
- **Make changes together.** Your loved one's diagnosis most likely means making some lifestyle changes. Going through that alone might feel isolating, so why not make the changes together as a team or household? Start exercising together or look for diabetes-friendly recipes to cook and eat together.
- **Set small goals.** Taking a step-by-step approach is the easiest way to make permanent lifestyle changes. Doing small things, such as taking a walk after dinner, can improve blood glucose and overall diabetes management, as well as allow you to look at the results and reevaluate as needed.
- **Work with your loved one's diabetes care team.** Attend doctor's appointments and diabetes education classes together if your loved one agrees. Listen to what both the healthcare providers and your loved one are saying, chiming in with what you know and asking questions to help your loved one get the best care possible.
- **Find support for yourself.** The best way to be a caregiver is to take care of yourself, too. Consider joining a support group for diabetes caregivers. It helps to meet others going through exactly what you are dealing with and take comfort in the support you can offer one another.

Source: American Diabetes Association (www.diabetes.org)