

# Planning for Your Future

## The challenge for 12 to 14 year olds



**G**rowing up with diabetes presents many challenges to you. Many people help you with your day-to-day responsibilities and help you get the medical care you need. These include your parents or guardians, your doctors, your diabetes nurses, your teachers, your school nurses, your coaches, and maybe even your babysitters, too.

As you get older, you get to be in charge of more things about your health care.

One important thing that will happen at some time in the future is that you will be leaving your pediatric diabetes team and transitioning to an adult diabetes care team. Believe it or not, now is the time for your pediatric team and your parents to start to prepare you for the day when you will become an adult!

preparing you to become an adult since the day you were born. They are making sure you get an education, have been teaching you right from wrong, and have been giving you clues about how adults behave by how they behave. However, it is also important that all the adults in your life now (including your health care providers) make sure that you are also learning everything you will need to know about your diabetes, your health care, and how you can balance diabetes care with all the wonderful things you will want to do in your future.

You are probably now in middle school and have more responsibilities for keeping track of your assignments, your classrooms, and your schedule. Now is a good time to take more responsibility for your health care, too.

Your parents or guardians and extended family have been

continued on back

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### How would you answer these questions?

(It would be a good sign of your emerging independence if you can answer yes to all of them!)

1. Do you know what diabetes is and what things make your blood sugars go up and what things make your blood sugars go down?
2. Do you know what types of insulin you take?
3. If you are on a pump, do you know how to work the pump? Do you change your own site and can you refill the reservoir?
4. If you are on injections, do you give your own insulin? Can you draw up your own insulin?
5. Are you participating in the discussions at home about the best dose of insulin to take at a particular time?
6. When you have your visit with your diabetes provider, do you answer the questions when they are asked?
7. If your diabetes provider suggests a plan that makes no sense to you, do you speak up?
8. Can you call your provider's office and make an appointment for yourself?
9. Can you call your pharmacy and ask if your prescription is ready?

### Tips for parents or guardians

An excellent way for young adolescents to demonstrate that they can handle responsibility is for them to perform **chores** at home. This prepares them for assuming the responsibility for aspects of their diabetes care.

**Volunteering** for community organizations allows them to demonstrate that they can follow through with commitments. Possibilities include helping with fund raising for diabetes organizations, working in an animal shelter, visiting with the elderly, helping out in church, etc. It gives them a sense that diabetes is not a disabling disease and a sense that they have valuable contributions to make to our world - today and in their futures.

Encouraging your child to take on some of the tasks like making appointments and phoning in for prescriptions (with your assistance as needed) will be time well spent.

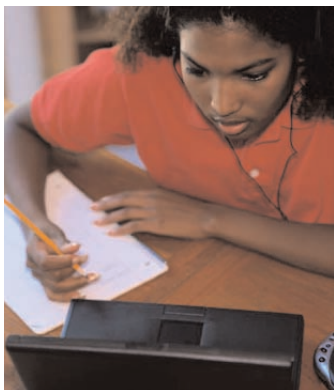
Likewise, encouraging your adolescent to suggest insulin dosing, food choices, and appropriate times for blood testing will allow your child to begin to rehearse making the decisions that will soon be theirs alone to make as they become older teens. You may be a cell phone call away, but taking the time to have them tell you what they think first will help them grow.

# Planning for Your Future

## The challenge for 15 to 17 year olds



**E**ven though you may not be thinking about this, you are now at a stage in your life when you are preparing yourself to become an independently functioning adult. Part of that future will include your diabetes care.



In this stage of your life, practicing the skills you will need to become an independent adult will prepare you for living on your own, maybe attending college, holding down a job, developing an intimate, adult-type relationship with another adult, and eventually maybe even parenting a child. This is the time to practice independence so that you will be comfortable and skilled when you become a "legal adult" at 18 years.



Living with diabetes at this time of your life is a bit of a roller coaster emotionally. You may not like it when your family asks about your diabetes care and checks up to see if you have done your blood sugar check or taken your insulin. It may sound to you like they are treating you as a child. However, there may be days when all you want is for someone else to take care of you and your diabetes and the thought of being a child again is

even appealing. There are probably other times when trying to balance diabetes care with school, sports, jobs, and a social life is just too overwhelming for you and you really just want to toss your insulin and strips into the recycling bin. However, it is important for your development that you start assuming more and more of a role in your health care.

**You should be able to answer "yes" to all the questions in the "Planning for Your Future:**

**The challenge for 12-14 year olds" pamphlet and some additional ones, too.**

1. Do you know what diabetes is and what things make your blood sugars go up and what things make your blood sugars go down?
2. Do you know what types of insulin you take?
3. If you are on a pump, do you know how to work the pump? Do you change your own site and can you refill the reservoir?
4. If you are on injections, do you give your own insulin? Can you draw up your own insulin?

[continued on back](#)

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5. Are you participating in the discussions at home about the best dose of insulin to take at a particular time?
6. When you have your visit with your diabetes provider, do you answer the questions when they are asked?
7. If your diabetes provider suggests a plan that makes no sense to you, do you speak up?
8. Can you call your provider's office and make an appointment for yourself?
9. Do you keep track of when your medications and supplies are low and you need refills? Do you call your provider to request these prescriptions? Can you call your pharmacy and ask if your prescription is ready?

**Time alone with your health care provider:** It is important for you to spend time alone with your health care provider. You will need to practice how to answer all the questions about your health that may have been answered by your parents up to now. You will need to think about the advice given to you and whether it makes sense to you and fits in with your life. If it doesn't, you will need to explain to your provider why and ask about alternatives.

**Your own record:** It is important to know your medical history. Keeping your own record is a good way. This also will make your parents more comfortable and they trust you to be safe with your friends, because they will know that you will be able to provide a good health history to any health care provider in an emergency.

### **An adult health care provider:**

Now is the time to ask how long your health care provider will be able to continue to see you and when you will need to transition to a provider to adults with diabetes.

**Wise choices:** Now is the time to show you are capable of making wise choices about alcohol and drug use, cigarette smoking, driving, and sexual behavior.

### **Tips for parents or guardians**

When your child turns 18 years, you will no longer have automatic access to your child's health information. Health care providers cannot give this to you unless your child signs permission to do so. Now is the time to discuss this transition with your teenager. You need to help your child understand the implications and importance of medical decision making.

# Planning for Your Future

## The challenge for 18 year olds and older



**Y**ou are now a legal adult. You have many of the rights of an adult including the right to consent for medical care and medical procedures. You control who may have access to your medical records. You have new rights, but you also have adult-type responsibilities especially when it comes to your medical care.



**The dilemma:** You may not always feel so adult-like and may not wish to be completely on your own. You may be living part or full-time with your parents or guardians. They may be helping you financially, especially if you are continuing your education. You may not feel ready to become a parent yourself yet.



**The age of majority:** Now that you are 18 years, however, it is important that you assume adult-like responsibility for management of your diabetes care. This doesn't mean that your family and friends are not still important to you for support and encouragement; no one with diabetes should ever feel alone and unaided. However, you must be the "captain of your ship" when it comes to caring for your health.

### **Medical providers for adults:**

You soon will need to transition to an adult-provider who will expect that you can provide your own health history, ask appropriate questions, make your own appointments, and access your own diabetes supplies. You and your parents have come to trust a particular provider or team of providers and now you must find the same sense of trust in a new provider.

### **Medical decision making:**

You will be responsible for making medical decisions for yourself. You should be asking for consultation and assistance from family and friends the way all adults do when faced with difficult choices. However, the final decision will be yours alone.

### **Health insurance:**

The largest hurdle to health care as you become older is accessing health insurance. You may still be on your parents' insurance plan or have access to lower cost insurance plans if you are still in school. When you complete school, if you are employed by an employer who offers health insurance as a benefit, you will have access to your

*continued on back*

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own health insurance. If not, you might be eligible for public health insurance. The sad news is that far too many young people between 20 and 30 years do not have adequate health insurance and this has an adverse impact on their health when they have diabetes.

**Sick day plans:** If you live away from your family, there will be times when you become ill and are not surrounded by people familiar with caring for diabetes during illness. It becomes increasingly important that you have a sick day plan which can include supportive friends to call for assistance with checking up on you, assistance with contacting your health care provider, assistance with checking blood sugars, helping to get prescriptions filled, and helping to decide if and when you may need to be brought to an emergency room.

**Wise choices:** As your parents and family have less and less knowledge of your day-to-day life, you can make increasingly more independent, mature choices about those aspects of your life that do not involve diabetes. Your wise decisions about drug and alcohol use along with avoiding cigarette smoking will help keep you healthier. Engaging in no or responsible

sexual behavior will lessen your risk of sexually transmitted infections and help you prepare for parenthood when the time is right.

**Mental health:** One last word about your mental health. Managing diabetes along with all the other adult responsibilities you will face can feel overwhelming at times. Depression, anxiety, and stress can cloud your judgment. It is adult-like to speak up about your feelings and ask for help from others, either professional or personal, in the event that you do feel overwhelmed. Many people have watched you grow up and care enormously about you. There may be times that you feel alone, but in truth, you are not. Even though you are now an adult, asking for help is still appropriate.