



TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR HEALTH CARE

Your diabetes healthcare team

WORKING WITH YOUR DIABETES HEALTHCARE TEAM

When you have type 2 diabetes, getting regular medical care is very important. Type 2 diabetes can affect many parts of the body. You will likely get your care from a team of experts. All the members of the team work to help you get your diabetes in control. One of the best ways to manage your type 2 diabetes is by working with your healthcare team.

Below you will find each of the most common members of the diabetes healthcare team, and what they do. You will also find sample questions that you can ask each of them.

Some people find that it is useful to make a list of their questions before they see their healthcare provider, and bring the list with them. It is important that you ask all your questions, even if you think it may be a small question.



Who Is on the Diabetes Healthcare Team?

Primary care physician (PCP)

Also known as a family physician, this doctor may be the center of your diabetes healthcare team. He or she may coordinate your care and refer you to other members of the team.

Sample questions you may want to ask your PCP:

- When is the best time to take my medicine?
- Will I always need medicine?
- How will I know when I am doing the right things for my type 2 diabetes?
- How often will I need to see you for my type 2 diabetes?
- When are screening tests due?
- When are routine surveillance test due?
- Will I need vaccinations?
- What are my BP, A1C, cholesterol levels and are those levels okay?

Other team members

As a person with type 2 diabetes, you will have other healthcare professionals as a part of your team. Starting on the next page is a table with a list of possible team members.

Although not every person with diabetes has the same professional on their healthcare team, many of the people listed below are part of a diabetes healthcare team.

Diabetes Health Professionals		
Who?	Description	Sample Questions to Ask
Endocrinologist	A doctor with special training in treating diseases such as diabetes. Not everyone with type 2 diabetes sees an endocrinologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How could weight loss affect my type 2 diabetes? • What happens if changing my diet and exercising aren't enough to control my blood sugar? • Will I have to take medicine?
Cardiologist (Heart Doctor)	A doctor who has special training in treating problems with the heart and blood vessels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can type 2 diabetes affect my heart? • How often should my electrocardiogram (EKG) be taken? • What if my cholesterol is elevated?
Ophthalmologist or Optometrist (Eye Doctor)	A specialist with advanced training who focuses on your eye health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can type 2 diabetes affect my vision? • What can I do if I am having trouble seeing? • What kind of eye problems should I be aware of? • How often should I have an eye exam?
Nephrologist (Kidney Doctor)	A doctor who has special training in treating kidney diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can type 2 diabetes affect my kidneys? • How often should my kidney function be tested?
Podiatrist (Foot Doctor)	Treats problems of the legs and feet, such as corns, calluses, and more serious problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How often should I check my feet, and what—if anything— should I be looking for?
Behavioral Health Professional	Trained to help people with the emotional aspects of living with type 2 diabetes. Could be a social worker, psychologist, psychiatrist, or family/marriage therapist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can I help myself be less depressed about having type 2 diabetes? • I am frustrated with my diagnosis; can you give me some advice?
Diabetes Nurse Educator	A registered nurse whose main job is teaching you about diabetes and how to manage it on a daily basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I use my test strips and meter? • How often should I test my blood sugar? • When should I take my medicine?
Dentist	A doctor with special training in oral care that treats potential problems with tooth decay and gum disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can type 2 diabetes affect my teeth and gums? • How often do I need to see my dentist? • How can I reduce my risk of gum disease?

Diabetes Health Professionals (cont'd)

Who?	Description	Sample Questions to Ask
Nurse Practitioner	A nurse with a graduate degree in advanced-practice nursing who can provide services that include diagnosing and managing conditions and writing prescriptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any side effects I should be aware of?
Exercise Physiologist	Has special training in the body and exercise, and will design a safe and effective exercise program that meets your specific needs. Make sure to have your PCP approve your exercise program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I haven't exercised in a long time. What should I do? • How often should I exercise and for how long? • What is the best time of day to exercise?
Physician's Assistant (PA)	Works closely with the physician and provides diagnostic, preventive, wellness, and treatment services under his or her supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can I get a flu shot even though I have type 2 diabetes? • What is low blood sugar?
Physician's Office Nurse	Often the first person you see at the physician's office, he or she gathers important information for the physician and may also give you educational support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have any information I can take home about type 2 diabetes? • Do you have something I can read about blood pressure levels?
Pharmacist	Knows about prescription and over-the-counter medicines, how they interact, and their effects on the body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have a new prescription. Will it interact with the things I am already taking? • Do OTC medicines have sugar in them?
Registered Dietitian	Training in nutrition and has passed a national exam. Teaches you about healthy eating and will develop a diet plan that takes into account your medical conditions, lifestyle, and the goals you set with your healthcare providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the best diet for someone with type 2 diabetes? • What types of fruits and vegetables are lowest in sugar? • Will diet help reduce or change the medications I take?
Office Manager/ Billing Staff	Verifies insurance coverage and completes paperwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will you file the insurance paperwork? • Are my visits here covered? • If my insurance changes, what information do you need from me?

My questions for my healthcare provider

Remember—always ask if you have questions! Your healthcare providers are there to help you.

Q: _____

A: _____

Q: _____

A: _____

Q: _____

A: _____

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