

Type 2 Diabetes: Tips for Healthy Living

If your child has been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, here is information from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) about managing blood glucose and tips for healthy living.

Managing Blood Glucose

What is blood glucose?

Glucose is found in the blood and is the body's main source of energy. The food your child eats is broken down by the body into glucose. Glucose is a type of sugar that gives energy to the cells in the body.

The cells need the help of insulin to take the glucose from the blood to the cells. Insulin is made by an organ called the *pancreas*.

In children with type 2 diabetes, the pancreas does not make enough insulin and the cells don't use the insulin very well.

Why is it important to manage blood glucose levels?

Glucose will build up in the blood if it cannot be used by the cells. High blood glucose levels can damage many parts of the body, such as the eyes, kidneys, nerves, and heart.

Your child's blood glucose levels may need to be checked on a regular schedule to make sure the levels do not get too high. Your child's doctor will tell you what your child's blood glucose level should be. You and your child will need to learn how to use a glucose meter. Blood glucose levels can be quickly and easily measured using a glucose meter. First, a lancet is used to prick the skin; then a drop of blood from your child's finger is placed on a test strip that is inserted into the meter.

Are there medicines for type 2 diabetes?

Your child's doctor may prescribe a medicine to take by mouth, or injections of insulin if needed, to help control your child's blood glucose levels. If your child's doctor has prescribed a medicine, it's important that your child take it as directed. Side effects from certain medicines may include bloating or gassiness. Check with your child's doctor if you have questions.

Along with medicines, your child's doctor will suggest changes to your child's diet and encourage your child to be physically active.

Tips for Healthy Living

A healthy diet and staying active are especially important for children with type 2 diabetes. Your child's blood glucose levels are easier to manage when your child is at a healthy weight.

Create a plan for eating healthy.

Talk with your child's doctor and registered dietitian about a meal plan that meets the needs of your child. Here are tips to help you select foods that are healthy and contain a high content of nutrients (protein, vitamins, and minerals).

- Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Include high-fiber, whole-grain foods such as brown rice, whole-grain pasta, corns, peas, and breads and cereals at meals. Sweet potatoes are also a good choice.
- Choose lower-fat or fat-free toppings like grated low-fat parmesan cheese, salsa, nonfat/low-fat gravy, low-fat sour cream, low-fat salad dressing, or yogurt.

- Select lean meats such as skinless chicken and turkey, fish, lean beef cuts (round, sirloin, chuck, loin, lean ground beef—no more than 15% fat content), and lean pork cuts (tenderloin, chops, ham). Trim off all visible fat. Remove skin from cooked poultry before eating.
- Include healthy oils such as canola or olive oil in your diet. Choose margarine and vegetable oils without trans fats made from canola, corn, sunflower, soybean, or olive oils.
- Use nonstick vegetable sprays when cooking.
- Use fat-free cooking methods such as baking, broiling, grilling, poaching, or steaming when cooking meat, poultry, or fish.
- Serve vegetable- and broth-based soups, or use nonfat (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk or evaporated skim milk when making cream soups.
- Use the Nutrition Facts label on food packages to find foods with less saturated fat per serving. Pay attention to the serving size as you make choices. Remember that the percent daily values on food labels are based on portion sizes and calorie levels for adults.

Create a plan for physical activity.

Physical activity, along with proper nutrition, promotes lifelong health. Here are ways to help support and encourage physical activity.

- **Encourage your child to be active at least 1 hour a day.** Active play is the best exercise for younger children! Parents and caregivers can join their children and have fun while being active too. School-aged child should participate every day in 1 hour or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity that is right for their age, is enjoyable, and involves a variety of activities.
- **Be mindful of screen time.** Create a Family Media Plan at HealthyChildren.org/MediaUsePlan. By creating a Family Media Plan, parents and caregivers can help children and teens balance their media use with other healthy activities.
- **Keep an activity log.** The use of activity logs can help children and teens keep track of their exercise programs and physical activity. Online tools can be helpful.
- **Get the whole family involved.** It is a great way to spend time together. Also, children who regularly see their parents and caregivers enjoying sports and physical activity are more likely to do so themselves.
- **Create a safe environment.** Make sure your child's equipment and chosen site for the sport or activity are safe. Make sure your child's clothing is comfortable and appropriate for the sport or activity.

Visit HealthyChildren.org for more information.

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