

# Supporting individuals with diabetes



# What is positive social support?

When they have support from loved ones, people can better manage their diabetes. However, what is the best way to support someone with diabetes? There is sometimes a fine line between caring and nagging. It is not always easy to know what to do or say.

**Some tips for caregivers, family and friends of individuals with diabetes, and how you can be a positive support to them:**

**Learn About Diabetes**

**Be a Good Listener**

**Learn What  
Low Blood Sugar Is**

**Do It Together**



**Help Ease Stress**

**Know When to  
Step Back**

**Coping with  
Stigmatisation**

# 1. Learn about diabetes

Myths and misinformation about diabetes are common. For those whose loved ones have diabetes, you can provide better support if you have accurate information about the condition. Consider accompanying your loved ones if he or she is attending a diabetes education class.

## Here are some key areas of diabetes management:

- Medication adherence
- Monitoring of blood sugar
- Eating habits/ diet
- Exercise - stay active
- Sleep patterns
- Stress management
- Skills for problem-solving
- Social support
- Spirituality – healthy sense of purpose and meaning in life



## 2. Be a good listener

- One of the most important things you can do to help someone with diabetes is to listen to them.
- Avoid making judgmental statements, just focus on what they are saying. They are more likely to be open when they are not being judged.
- Avoid giving advice, unless requested as unsought advice can damage your relationship.

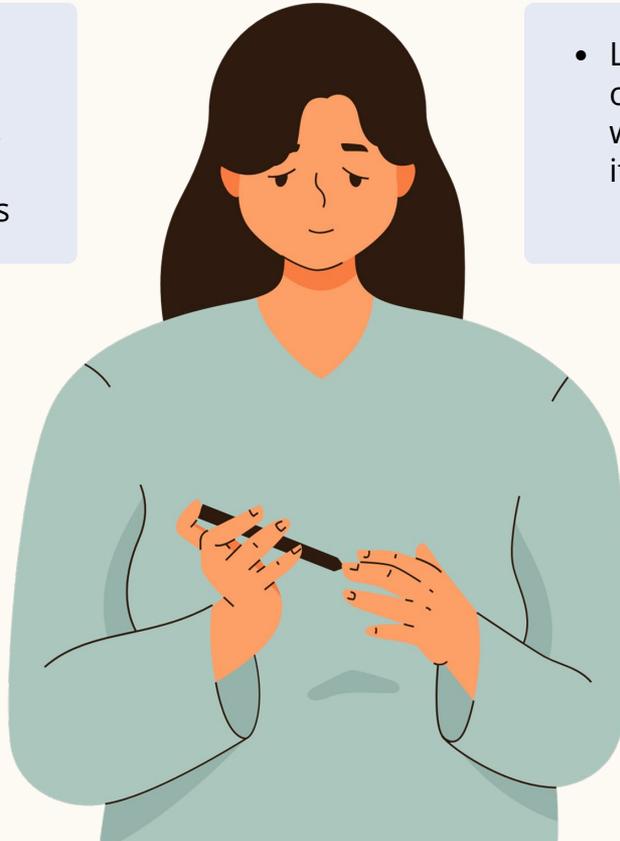


### **Here are some helpful questions you can ask when talking about diabetes with your loved ones:**

- Would you like to share with me what the hardest part of managing your diabetes is?
- What can I do to help?
- Are there things I can do to help you make it easier to manage your diabetes (as your parent/spouse/friend/ colleague)?
- Would it be useful for me to help you:
  - ↳ Set up reminders to take your medications?
  - ↳ Prick your fingers for monitoring blood sugar?
  - ↳ Inject insulin?
- Would you like me to take you or accompany you to your doctor visits?

### 3. Learn what low blood sugar is

- People with diabetes can experience '**hypoglycaemia**' or low blood sugar (blood sugar less than 4.0 mmol/L) when they use insulin or certain oral medications



- Learn about the signs and symptoms of **low blood sugar**, how to treat it when it happens, and how to prevent it from happening

## 4. Do it together

- A diabetes diagnosis is a chance for everyone in the family to make lifestyle changes together to be healthier.
- For example, stop buying unhealthy snacks for the home. If you and your loved ones eat out at a hawker centre, make a decision to order healthier options. If you are going to someone's home, check ahead to help ensure there are healthy food and drink choices available. Discuss with the host on behalf of your loved ones, and avoid discussing it in front of the person with diabetes during the visit.
- Your role is not to be the food police but to support healthy choices, which can include a piece of cake every now and then. Plan for such occasions and go ahead to enjoy together once in a while.



## 5. Help ease stress



- Too much stress can raise blood sugar levels and make it harder to manage diabetes. Encourage your loved ones to talk about feelings and frustrations.
- Try doing things together like walking, gardening, watching a funny movie or attending a diabetes support group.
- Use creative ways to manage stress.
- Manage life problems together, have a positive mindset, and learn good problem-solving skills.

## 6. Know when to step back

- Remember that the person with diabetes is responsible for managing it, not you. Living with diabetes can be difficult. By having the positive support of family and friends, they are better able to make the best possible choices about their diabetes.
- Sometimes less can be more. Know when to give your loved ones the space to reflect on their own, and make mistakes. Be sensitive if they are experiencing any diabetes distress or burnout from managing it. Learn what the signs are, and gently encourage them to seek help instead of blaming or scolding them for poor management.

