

# Partnering With Your Health Care Team

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Many people find it hard to talk with their doctor or other health care team members. Appointments can feel rushed, or it can be hard to speak up or ask questions in the moment. Being prepared can help people with diabetes get the most out of visits with their health care team.

Visits with health care providers can include appointments with doctors, nurses, physician assistants, diabetes care and education specialists, pharmacists, dentists, podiatrists, dietitians, and any other specialists. Primary health care providers will often make referrals to diabetes self-management education and support (DSMES) services so that patients with diabetes can have access to a diabetes care and education specialist.

## By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Name at least three things they plan to do to make sure they get the most out of their upcoming visits with their doctor or other health care team members.
- Name at least one question they plan to ask at their next health care visit.
- Say how often it is recommended that they visit their regular health care provider, eye doctor, dentist, or other specialists to manage their diabetes.

## MODULE 7

🕒 **DISCUSSION TIME**  
45-60 minutes

- 📋 **OUTLINE**
1. Talking to your health care team
  2. Family support during health care visits
  3. When to visit your health care team

## ☆ KEY MESSAGES

1. Preparing for health visits by writing down questions and bringing a list of all prescriptions and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and supplements can help people with diabetes get the most out of each visit.

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2. It is important that people with diabetes be their own best advocate for how they feel and what they think. Speaking up and asking questions, especially if something seems confusing or unclear, is important.

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3. Family and friends are a great support system for managing health care and going to health care visits.

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## 🔗 CONNECTING THREADS

Connecting Threads are topics that can be incorporated into all *New Beginnings* sessions depending on the goals and needs of your participants.

Recommended Connecting Threads:

- [Facilitating \*New Beginnings\* Online](#)
- [Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support Services](#)
- [Building Social Connections in Family and Community Circles](#)
- [Understanding Health Information](#)

## 🖱️ GOING VIRTUAL TIPS

- Discuss if and how group members are engaging with their health care providers through telehealth.
- Instead of pairing off participants into the activities, use the breakout room feature of your video teleconferencing platform (if available). Or, go around the “room” and have each participant share with the whole group. See the [Connecting Thread: Facilitating \*New Beginnings\* Online](#) for ideas on how to adapt activities.
- The video stories for this module can be played by sharing your screen (and computer audio) through your video teleconferencing platform. Another option is to share the links to the videos with your group members by email before the session starts.



## MATERIALS

Suggested stories for this module:

- [Getting Ready for Your Diabetes Care Visit](#): Dr. Gavin talks about the steps to get ready for a visit with the health care team. (Video: about 3 minutes)
- [It Takes a Family](#): The Clayton family works together to support their elderly father who has diabetes. (Video: about 5 minutes)

Handouts:

- [Steps to Help You Stay Healthy With Diabetes](#)
- [5 Questions to Ask Your Health Care Team](#)
- [Team Roster Worksheet](#) (optional)

# Group Discussion

This discussion will focus on making the most of your visits with your health care team.

## Talking to Your Health Care Team

### GROUP LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

### TALKING POINTS AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



**SAY:**

Many people find it hard to talk with their doctor or other health care team members. When you are at an appointment, you may not know what questions to ask, or you may forget what you want to ask in the moment. You may feel like the health care provider is in a hurry and does not have the time to answer your questions.



**ASK:**

Think about a recent visit you had with a health care provider such as a doctor, nurse practitioner, or other specialist.

- How comfortable did you feel talking with the health care provider? Did you remember to say everything you wanted?
- What are some reasons you have found it difficult to talk with your health care provider in the past?

*Examples of reasons: Didn't know or forgot what to ask, felt like there was no time, felt embarrassed by my questions, felt like I should know the answers and did not want to admit that I didn't, felt like my health care provider didn't have time for me, didn't trust my health care provider, felt that my doctor wasn't listening.*



**WATCH:**

[Getting Ready for Your Diabetes Care Visit](#) (Video: about 3 minutes)

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**ASK:**

What did you think when Dr. Gavin said that you don't need permission to ask questions about your health because you are the person in charge of managing your diabetes?

How often do you feel like you are in charge of managing your diabetes and are getting advice from your health care team? What helps you to feel in charge or makes you feel like you are not in charge?

What can you bring to your next health care visit to better partner with your health care team?

In our second week, we used a goal-setting sheet to track goals, test results, and other information at each health care visit. Have you used this tool since we worked on our goals?

Let's take out a sheet of paper. Please write down 1 to 3 questions you would like to ask your doctor, nurse practitioner, dietitian, or other health care provider on your next visit.

*Examples of what to bring: List of questions and any recent problems, blood sugar results, medication list, [handout: My Diabetes Care Record and Action Plan from Steps to Help You Stay Healthy With Diabetes](#) (give each participant a copy).*



**SAY:**

Taking your tracking sheet and a list of questions and concerns you want to discuss to your visit will help you make sure all your needs and concerns are addressed.

- Think about your questions ahead of time. Write them down and give the list to the health care provider at the start of the appointment.
- Bring a list of all medicines, vitamins, and herbal remedies you take, including how often and how much.
- Bring your blood glucose measurements.
- Bring your goal setting and tracking sheet to be sure to talk to your doctor about your ABCs, foot health, body weight, medicines, and goals.
- Talk about other tests that people with diabetes should have on a regular basis, including eye, ear, teeth, and foot exams.

Many smartphones have note-taking tools and apps that can be a helpful alternative to pen and paper. You can also set reminders on your phone to make sure you remember both the day and time of your visit and what you want to bring and ask about. Your health care provider may also use the teach-back method with you, where they will ask you to explain back in your own words what you were told.

Be honest. Tell your health care provider if you miss taking your pills, how often, and why. You might have trouble remembering to take the one at bedtime, or it might upset your stomach if you take it in the morning.

Make the most of your health care visit. Taking these steps can make it easier to talk with your health care team and get the answers you need.

Being an advocate for yourself means recognizing that you know yourself better than anyone else! By sharing your thoughts and concerns, you can better manage your diabetes.



**ACTIVITY:**

Think-Pair-Share: Partnering With the Health Care Team  
(or role-playing activity)

The goal of this activity is for participants to think about questions they would like to ask at their next visit to a health care provider and to practice bringing up questions during a visit.

**GROUP LEADER  
INSTRUCTIONS**

**TALKING POINTS AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**



**ACTIVITY:**

- Give each participant a copy of the [Steps to Help You Stay Healthy With Diabetes](#) handout.
- Ask them to look through the handout and think of questions they would like to ask their health care provider.
- Ask participants to pair with another group member and practice bringing up questions and concerns with their health care provider. Have participants take turns playing the part of the health care provider while the other participant practices asking questions.
- Ask one person from each group to share the strategy they used to bring up issues and concerns with their health care provider.

## When to Visit your Health Care Team

**GROUP LEADER  
INSTRUCTIONS**

**TALKING POINTS AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**



**SAY:**

*Give each participant a copy of [5 Questions to Ask Your Health Care Team](#)*

How often should you schedule visits with the different members of your health care team?

It is recommended that you see a doctor or regular health care provider at least twice a year and your eye doctor and dentist (or other specialists) at least once a year.

Do not wait too long for an appointment. If your regular doctor is not available, ask if another doctor in the practice can see you as a walk-in or for one appointment until you can see your regular doctor. You can also ask the receptionist to call you if the office has any cancellations.

If you do not have a health care provider, it is critical to find one for regular follow-up care. Community health centers that accept Medicaid or Medicare or provide sliding scale payments for people without insurance are located in many communities.

Working with other healers such as a massage therapist or naturopath can help you feel better, but they should not take the place of your doctor or other health care provider (like a nurse practitioner or physician assistant). You should always talk to your doctor or pharmacist before trying home remedies or nonprescription medications.

Finally, if you are having chest pressure or increased shortness of breath, **DO NOT WAIT**. Call 911 or go to the emergency room.

# Family Support During Health Care Visits

## GROUP LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

## TALKING POINTS AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



### WATCH:

[It Takes a Family](#) (Video: about 3 minutes)



### ASK:

What are some ways Mr. Clayton's family helped him with his health care?

What did they do that helped him manage his diabetes?

What do you think they did that might have gotten in the way of him managing his diabetes?



### ASK:

Did you notice any similarities between your family and the Clayton family?

What are some ways that families can help a person with diabetes get the most out of their health care visits?



### SAY:

Family and friends can help during the visit by:

- Being there for emotional support.
- Being a second set of ears to keep track of the information from the provider.
- Helping keep track of appointments and test results.
- Helping you to remember questions you want to ask.
- Helping with setting goals.
- Picking up prescriptions and reminding you to take medicines.



### SAY:

Family members can be a big help during health care visits, especially if they help you in managing your diabetes.

But, sometimes having a family member or friend at a health care visit can create a challenge, especially if the family member takes over the conversation or makes it hard for you to "be in charge" of your visit.



ASK:

What are some ways that family members or friends might get in the way of you being in charge during your health care visits?

What are some things family members can do to make sure you are in charge during your health care visit?

*Examples: Talking too much, asking questions that are “off topic,” and disagreeing with the patient in front of the doctor.*

*(The family members can be reminded that as the person with diabetes, you are the focus of the visit; you can talk with them before the visit about how you would like them to participate.)*



SAY:

Even if a family member went to the appointment with you, it is helpful to talk about what happened to be sure that everyone heard the same information and advice.

Keeping family members “in the loop” can help them find positive ways to provide support and prevent them from doing less helpful things like nagging.



ASK:

What are some things you can talk about after the appointment?



SAY:

After your visit to the health care provider, here are some ways you can reflect on the visit with your family member(s):

- Review the advice you heard. Talk about what it means.
- Talk about what seems to be working and what can be improved.
- Review the goals that you set with the health care team.
- Set goals for how family members can help support you in reaching your goals.



ASK:

Ask participants to think about ways their family members can support them during their health care visits and write down some ideas. Ask participants to share their ideas in pairs, then with the rest of the group.



## CLOSE THE SESSION

- Take final questions.
- Thank the group for their participation.
- Explain the at-home activity, if applicable.
- Remind participants about the next session. Ask if they have specific questions or issues they would like addressed.
- Ask participants to do the session evaluation.

### AT-HOME ACTIVITY

- Pass out copies of the [Team Roster Worksheet](#). Explain that the person with diabetes is the general manager (GM). They are responsible for making sure that everyone on the team understands their position or role. They can work with family members to complete the roster. Family members should talk about how they can support the person with diabetes and write down their specific roles on the roster. Write down contact information for each person. Make copies for family members to keep in a place where they can find it quickly. Remind participants that the GM can move or change positions as needed. The GM will need to keep the roster up-to-date.

## RESOURCES

Use these resources to learn more about building self-confidence, expand the discussion, or provide additional resources to participants.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
  - [Don't Blame Me!: Helping Providers and People with Diabetes Overcome Challenges for Behavior Change](#) (webinar recording)
- National Institutes of Health:
  - [Talking With Your Doctor or Health Care Provider](#)
- American Diabetes Association:
  - [Get to Know Your Diabetes Care Team](#)