

scan club

A NEWSLETTER FOR SCAN HEALTH PLAN® MEMBERS

DIABETES EDITION 2019



Losing Weight on a Healthy Diet of Patience and Persistence

During a phone call with Peer Advocate MaryKay Kubota last September, 79-year-old SCAN member Judy R. admitted she was trying to lose weight, in part to help control her diabetes. Judy said that COPD, arthritis in her hands and using a walker to get around made exercise a challenge. That's when MaryKay sent her an exercise band and a brochure with healthy living tips for people with diabetes. A few months later, we checked back with Judy and she happily reported that she was using the band and following the dietary guidelines in the brochure—and had lost 16 pounds in the process.

We recently followed up with Judy again to see how she was doing and ask if she had any tips for other SCAN members coping with the challenges of diabetes. She talked frankly about the ups and downs and finding what works in helping her gain better control of her diabetes and her health.

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Judy appreciates the help from her grandson, Tyler

How are you doing with your weight loss?

Judy: I'm still keeping at it. Losing weight is the hardest thing for me because I'm not as mobile as I was before—but I keep trying. I know that it's important to my health and that it takes time, so I have to be patient and work at it. I exercise every day and eat healthy meals. My grandson visits often and helps me stay on the straight and narrow.

What are you doing for exercise these days?

Judy: I do exercises with the band every morning. You should see the video my grandson took of me doing my exercises one time when the band slipped and got me right in the face. We laughed so hard! I also take walks with my walker around the house several times a day. Sometimes it's just to the bathroom and back, but it gets me up and around.

What are some of the healthy meals you like?

Judy: I eat a lot of salads and vegetables. One of my favorites is a salad with lettuce, tomatoes, shredded carrots, broccoli mix and Wishbone balsamic vinaigrette. Sometimes, I'll bake chicken or fish, like cod or haddock, and have it for dinner with a plain baked potato. For dessert, I'll have one of the Fuji apples my neighbor brings me, or sugar-free Jello. If I'm really craving something sweet, I'll have one of the Atkins sugar-free treats. When I go out to lunch—and I never miss a chance to go out to lunch—I'll usually have soup or salad. Every once in a while, I treat myself and have a bowl of clam chowder. That's the best!



I know that losing weight is important to my health and takes time, so I have to be patient and work at it."

—Judy R.

Do you have any tips for other seniors like yourself with diabetes?

Judy: Stick to what the doctor says. I quit smoking, I'm eating better and exercising more. Taking care of yourself really does make a difference.



Know Your Blood Sugar

The only surefire way you can know whether or not your diabetes is under control is if you check your blood sugar regularly. Keep tabs on your blood sugar levels through both daily testing done on your own and regular A1c tests done in your doctor's office every two to three months.

The general target levels for these tests are listed here. But talk with your doctor; he or she can help you determine the target ranges that are best for you.

General Self-Monitor Targets		General A1c Goals	
Before meals: 70 to 130 mg/dL	1 to 2 hours after meals: Less than 180 mg/dL	If you are healthy and active: Less than 7%	If you are older and have serious health problems: Between 7% and 8%

Testing your blood sugar consistently is essential for you to be able to take the reins on your diabetes. Do it along with eating a healthy and well-balanced diet and exercising regularly. You may be able to minimize the amount of medication you need, while still keeping your blood sugars, blood pressure and blood cholesterol at their safest levels. And the better your diabetes is controlled, the lower your risk is for more serious problems later on.



Remove Barriers and Open Doors With Exercise

Dr. Terry Offenberger, one of SCAN's medical directors, shares why exercise is an important tool in his diabetes management.

Regular physical activity is one of the most important pieces of successfully managing diabetes. I've seen its benefits both for my patients and in my own life. Since being diagnosed with diabetes, I've found that regular exercise helps me keep my blood sugar at safe levels, maintain a healthy weight and reduce stress. There have been some unexpected benefits, too. Through exercise, I have made new friends and had experiences that I had always dreamed of but not thought possible.

Since there's strong evidence that regular exercise goes a long way in preventing or delaying most complications from diabetes, I try to find ways to be active almost every day. There are a few tricks I've found that can help make that happen.

Make it as easy as possible. I sign up for arranged group hikes through the Sierra Club and an online app. This is easier for me than if I had to plan every hike for myself. I do these hikes two to three days every week and they have become a habit, an expected part of my routine. On the days that I don't go on a hike, I lift weights at a gym that is close and convenient so that I can fit my exercise in before work.

It also helps me to lay out my hiking clothes or gym clothes the night before so that I can get out the door faster in the morning.

Find activities with more reasons to do them than excuses not to. I've found exercising with other people has many benefits. If I don't show up for a hike that I've signed up for, not only am I not getting the exercise I need, I'm also letting down others who are counting on me to be there. Meeting other active people also creates more opportunities. Many of the people I've met through hiking have become friends and we often meet before or after hikes for a meal.

When I joined a hiking club a few years ago I could barely walk a flat five miles. Back then, doing a rim-to-rim hike of the Grand Canyon or backpacking in the Sierras seemed unimaginable. But when you start making yourself more active and more available, people start reaching out and your opportunities snowball. It's a virtuous cycle.

Don't wait. You don't need a certain level of ability before you can start being active. Do anything! Just move. The effects of physical activity on blood sugar are immediately noticeable. If my blood sugar levels are high, I go for a short walk outside and can see on my blood glucose monitor that the amount of sugar in my blood drops.

I often think about how strange it is that it took a chronic illness to get me in what may be the best shape of my life so far. Living with diabetes has inspired me to take better care of myself. And doing so has opened the door to better health, new friends and enriching experiences that I probably wouldn't have had otherwise.



Ready to Exercise? Get to It Feet First!

It's a good idea to check your feet **before and after** you work out. Diabetes can damage your nerves so that you don't feel pain in your feet. You could have a cut or blister on your foot and not realize it, and it could become infected. So, take a good look at your feet— toes to heels and tops to soles—every time you exercise. If you notice any changes, such as pain, sores or blisters, let your doctor know right away. Have problems with your feet treated right away, before they get out of hand.

Your Diet Is Your Choice

Many people still think that having diabetes means a person just can't eat sweets. But if you're someone who regularly checks his or her blood sugar levels (and we hope you are), you know that cakes, candies and sodas aren't the only foods that can make your blood sugar levels go awry. Eating highly processed foods, like white bread and potato chips, can also cause dangerous spikes in glucose levels. Even some foods that are often considered "healthy" but are high in carbohydrates (think bananas) can make blood sugar levels spike.

The truth is, there are no foods that people with diabetes can't eat, only foods that they choose not to eat or to eat only in moderation so they can keep their blood sugar levels in a safe and healthy range. By swapping foods high in carbohydrates with foods rich in fiber you can control the amount of sugar in your blood and still enjoy meals that are delicious, nutritious and satisfying.

Try making these easy switches the next time you plan your meals:

Instead of...	Swap for...
Baked potato or French fries	Sweet potato, whole wheat pasta
White rice	Brown or wild rice, quinoa
Cooked carrots, beets	Raw carrots, green beans
Bananas, cantaloupe	Apples, berries
Raisins	Figs, dried apricots

Since being diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, SCAN Medical Director Dr. Terry Offenberger has found delicious and nutritious alternatives to the foods that make his blood sugar levels skyrocket. Almost every morning for breakfast, he enjoys a bowl of his special-recipe oatmeal alongside a cappuccino made with almond milk.



I love my breakfast; it tastes great, fills me up and is so healthy. The mixture of healthy fat, protein and starchy carbs makes it much easier to control my blood sugar than if I was to have something like a plate of pancakes with butter and syrup."

—Dr. Terry Offenberger

Dr. Offenberger's 5-4-3-2-1 Oatmeal



- 5-grain oatmeal:** Cook one serving with water according to package directions.
- 4 spices:** Add a pinch each of cardamom, nutmeg, cinnamon and turmeric.
- 3 seeds:** Mix in one teaspoon each of ground chia seeds and ground flaxseed meal and one tablespoon hemp hearts.
- 2 berries:** Top with a handful of two or more berries (*he uses blackberries, blueberries and raspberries*).
- 1 spoonful at a time:** Eat mindfully, slowly enjoying each bite and the good it's doing for you and your body.

Trying to Lose Weight? Try the 200-Calorie-a-Day Plan

While you would certainly lose weight eating only 200 calories a day, that's not what we're suggesting! Quite the opposite, in fact. The 200-calorie-a-day plan is about following your normal diet (assuming you are eating in a diabetes-friendly way) and making two small changes in your daily routine:



- 1. Eat 100 calories less.** An easy way: Eat your sandwich open-faced, or with a piece of lettuce in place of the top piece of bread.
- 2. Burn 100 calories more.** Adding a 20-minute walk to your daily routine is one idea.

Do this for just one year and you could lose as much as 20 pounds. Not only does maintaining a healthy weight help you feel better and look better, it's also an important part of keeping your diabetes in check.

Is Your Diabetes Bringing You Down?

Just as there are important things you can do to avoid physical complications of diabetes, there are steps you can take to protect your mental health, too.



People with diabetes are two to three times more likely to be depressed than people without diabetes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/managing/mental-health.html>). Being depressed can make caring for your diabetes harder, so also look for signs that your emotional health needs attention.

Are any of the following true for you?

- I often feel worried, anxious, angry or sad, even when I don't have a reason to.
- I don't feel like doing the things or seeing the people I used to enjoy.
- I'm worried I won't be able to do what I need to manage my diabetes. In fact, I often wonder if it's even worth it.
- I'm so hungry all the time. Or, I have no interest in food and have to force myself to eat.
- I'm always tired.
- I feel isolated and think others don't understand what I have to go through.
- I've been getting bad headaches lately or feeling sick to my stomach a lot of the time.

Each of these could be a sign it's time to do something now so that things don't get worse.

Everyone copes with stress differently so you'll have to find the strategies that work best for you. Start by trying some of these techniques:

Try relaxation. Take several deep breaths in and out, letting air in through your nose so that it fills your lungs. Then, let it escape through your mouth, and the stress along with it. Progressive muscle relaxation and yoga can also calm both mind and body.

Do something you enjoy. Take at least a few minutes of every day to do something that makes you feel happy. Plan for a time with no distractions so you can devote your full attention to what you love most.

Get up and go. Being active isn't only good for controlling your diabetes; there are many ways it can also improve your emotional health and well-being. You may be surprised how a short walk down the block can improve your outlook.

Connect. Social connections can make a real difference in a person's quality of life. Even if you don't not feel like it at first, calling a family member for a short chat, meeting a friend for a movie or joining a group activity nearby will likely make you feel better.

Keep an eye on the prize. Taking care of your diabetes may not always be easy but doing so is the surest path to being able to live a healthy and active life. And that's something to look forward to.

IF YOU NEED MORE HELP

It's normal to feel down every once and while, but if it's been a few weeks and you're not feeling better, it's time to get some help from a professional.

Make an appointment with your doctor to describe your physical and emotional symptoms. He or she can review your diabetes management plan and, if needed, prescribe medication or recommend a behavioral health specialist for you to talk to.

If it's an emergency and you're thinking about harming yourself or another person, get help immediately. Call 911 or one of these hotlines:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-8255 (TTY: 1-800-799-4889)

Institute on Aging's Friendship Line
1-800-971-0016

‘Insulin Will Make Me Sicker’

And Other Myths You May Have Heard—But Shouldn’t Believe



MYTH: You don’t need to take your diabetes medications if your blood sugar is normal.

FACT: If your blood sugar level is in the normal range, that means you’re doing a great job managing it. So keep doing what you’re doing! Remember, you don’t have diabetes only when your blood sugar is high. You have it 24/7, so being consistent with taking your medications is key to managing your diabetes.

MYTH: People only have to take insulin when their diabetes gets worse.

FACT: People with type 1 diabetes must take insulin because their bodies don’t produce it. For some people with type 2 diabetes, insulin is the best course of action for keeping their blood sugar at healthy levels.

Insulin, like exercise, diet and diabetes medications, is just one of the tools that work together to successfully keep a person’s blood sugar at safe levels. Using these tools to manage your diabetes day to day can delay more serious problems from developing, or may help you avoid them altogether.



Having to start taking insulin is not a sign of personal failure. It only means that exercise, diet and pills aren’t doing enough anymore.”

—Dr. Terry Offenberger

MYTH: Taking insulin hurts.

FACT: As a doctor and a person with type 1 diabetes, SCAN Medical Director Dr. Terry Offenberger has been on both sides of the needle. “While I have to admit that I still prefer being the one giving a shot rather than getting one,” he says, “it was much easier to tolerate testing my blood with finger pricks than I had thought it would be. Similarly, I got used to the insulin needle, which is very small. Now I barely think about it. It’s something I have to do to stay healthy.”

MYTH: If you need insulin it’s because you haven’t been doing enough to take care of yourself.

FACT: “Having to start taking insulin is not a sign of personal failure,” Dr. Offenberger says. “It only means that exercise, diet and pills aren’t doing enough to control blood sugar levels anymore and insulin can help do that.”

MYTH: Taking insulin can lead to blindness, amputation and dialysis.


FACT: Insulin is a hormone produced naturally by the body to help it work well. Insulin does not cause blindness, nerve damage or kidney disease. In fact, Dr. Offenberger points out that it’s now understood that these conditions are often the result of *uncontrolled* diabetes. While good care doesn’t guarantee you won’t develop complications, taking insulin to control your diabetes makes it more likely you can avoid them.

Cost-Savers to Keep You on Track

If the cost of brand-name diabetic medications, including insulin, is making it hard to stay on your treatment plan, help could be within reach.

- ▶ Ask your doctor if samples of your medication are available.
- ▶ There may be a generic or other medication that costs less and works as well as a brand-name medication you’re taking. Check with your doctor to see.
- ▶ Contact the company that makes the drug (your pharmacist can tell you if you don’t know). Ask if there’s a patient assistance program you qualify for.
- ▶ Call SCAN Member Services for help finding a patient assistance program or to see if you qualify for the Low-Income Subsidy (LIS) program.

MANAGING YOUR DIABETES



Listed below are tests you should have every year to help manage your diabetes. You'll see that you're either due for a test, the test doesn't apply to you in 2019 or we recommend you talk to your doctor about the test. If you haven't done these yet, be sure to schedule an appointment. Fill in the date you receive your diabetes care in 2019.

PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT	GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS	LAST DONE ON	DUE IN 2019	DATE RECEIVED
<input type="checkbox"/> Blood test to measure blood sugar (HbA1c)	At least yearly -- every three months is recommended			___/___/___
<input type="checkbox"/> Diabetic eye exam (different from your vision exam)	At least yearly			___/___/___
<input type="checkbox"/> Blood or urine test to measure kidney function	At least yearly			___/___/___
<input type="checkbox"/> Foot exam by doctor or nurse	At least yearly			___/___/___
<input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes medications/insulin	Fill prescription and take as directed			___/___/___
<input type="checkbox"/> Medications to lower cholesterol and/or prevent heart disease (statins)	Fill prescription and take as directed			___/___/___

We've Made One Just for You Your 2019 Health Check Record

Your new Health Check Record for 2019 is on its way and is filled with useful information and tips to help you get the care you need this year.

When you receive your pamphlet in the mail, open it up to the list of the six tests or types of care recommended for people with diabetes and how often the tests should be done. You'll see that this list is personalized. It will show when you last had each one done or if you are due for a test or should talk with your doctor. The Health Check Record includes additional preventive care recommendations, too.

As you receive care throughout the year, mark the dates in your Health Check Record. That way, you'll have a record in one place of the all care you've received so that you can see at any time what's still needed before the year's out. Your personalized Health Check Record is also available online in your member account. If you don't have a member account yet, set one up by going to scanhealthplan.com/members and click on "Register."

NOTE: If you chose to get your personalized health information notifications by email, then you won't receive a mailed copy of the Health Check Record. You can do this in the Communication Preferences section of your member account.

If you are new to SCAN this year, you already received our "new member" version of the Health Check Record, which does not include a separate section on diabetes. Be sure to follow up with your doctor on the tests and exams noted in the chart shown above.

Ask Dr. Magda

Expert advice for your health questions



Dear Dr. Magda,

My daughter is always nagging me to test my blood sugar levels. I usually test my levels once or twice a week, but she's saying that I need to test it several times a day. I've been in this body 73 years—30 of them with diabetes—so I think I know it pretty well. Plus, the soreness that comes from pricking my finger makes gardening hard—and I love to garden. Can't I just pay close attention to how I'm feeling and not worry so much about testing all the time?

Sincerely, *Tired of Testing*

Dear Tired,

I agree with you that we get to know our own bodies and become experts about our chronic conditions. But when it comes to the importance of regular blood sugar testing, I'm going to have to side with your daughter because regular testing is the only way to tell if your diabetes is under control.

Even when we feel good, our blood sugar levels can be out of whack. So, it's really important to stick to the testing schedule recommended by your doctor. If your blood sugar stays stable, ask him or her if you can test less often.

As far as the soreness you're feeling from finger pricks, try rolling your finger to the side and prick the side of your fingertip instead of the center. Hopefully, this will reduce the tenderness and make gardening less painful. But don't forget to wear gloves when working in the garden so that you can prevent infection.

Happy gardening! *Dr. Magda*

Dr. Magda Lenartowicz is one of SCAN's associate medical directors.

If you have a general health question for Dr. Magda, send it to the street address or email address on the back of this newsletter. Some questions received may be answered in a future issue of SCAN Club. If you have a question that's urgent or specific to your care, talk with your doctor.

Need Assistance? SCAN Health Plan is here to help.



Sales Information

1-800-547-1317; TTY: 711

8 a.m. – 8 p.m. Pacific Time (PT)

Monday – Friday



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Member Services

1-800-559-3500; TTY: 711

8 a.m. – 8 p.m. Pacific Time (PT)

Seven days a week from Oct. 1 – Mar. 31

Monday – Friday from Apr. 1 – Sept. 30

Note: Between Apr. 1 and Sept. 30, messages received during weekends and holidays will be returned within one business day.

SCAN Health Plan® is an HMO plan with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in SCAN Health Plan depends on contract renewal. This information is not a complete description of benefits. Call 1-800-559-3500 (TTY: 711) for more information. Other providers and pharmacies are available in our network.



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SPECIAL EDITION 2019



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