



The 8760 Guide for People with Diabetes

If you spend as many as 6 hours a year at your doctor's office (more than most of us), that still leaves 8,760 hours each year you are "on your own" to manage your diabetes. Here are the things your health plan and community should provide you to help you with that big task.

- A personal connection with your health care team -- doesn't need to be a doctor but it does need to be someone who knows you and is available to help you get the other things you need.
- Someone with time to find out about you and how diabetes fits into your life -- or doesn't!
- Help in figuring out your own goals for taking care of your own diabetes
- Help in learning the variety of skills you need to know, from how to read the labels on food so you can figure out what you want to eat, to how to cope with the stress that problems like diabetes put into our lives
- A variety of ways of learning those skills. Some of us like to use the web, some of us like groups, some of us want to read a book. Whatever your style, there should be ways that make sense for you to learn the skills you need.
- Materials that explain your diabetes in terms you can understand and that are consistent from one person to another. It doesn't help if your doctor calls it "glucose control," your nurse calls it "A1cs" and your dietitian calls it "blood sugar." If these folks can't get their act together, how am I supposed to!
- Some way to get questions answered as they come up.
- Help in making sure you see the doctor 3 or 4 times a year to check up on your diabetes, even if you're not sick.
- Someone -- an individual, a group, maybe even a "chat room" -- who can listen when you just need to be heard
- Convenient, safe and attractive places you can walk or get other physical activity you like
- Places you can buy healthy food that you enjoy and that you can afford
- Family, friends and neighbors who understand what you are dealing with
- A primary care system that makes care available, convenient, tailored to your needs, and as pleasant as possible

