




TOGETHER ON DIABETES

A handbook for diabetes buddies



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YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS IMPORTANT

Every year, over 15,000 people are diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, and there is every indication that this number will rise in future.

People living with diabetes spend most of their lives outside the health system. While professional efforts are important, they cannot do all the work of limiting complications by changing habits or lifestyle.

Some people are more at risk of complications than others. This applies in particular to those who live alone, are less educated and do not work. They don't go to the doctor early enough, and often face other challenges in their daily life which mean they don't take proper care of their diabetes. We aim to work together to reduce this inequality in health, which is also reflected in the field of diabetes.

Loneliness is a problem. People who are lonely often don't have the resources to look after their diabetes. We also know that lonely people are often stressed, anxious or depressed. We should never have to deal with our condition alone.

This is why your contribution is important. Together we can support people who are facing their type 2 diabetes alone, and take care of those who don't have the resources to take proper care of themselves and their condition.

Together on Diabetes (Sammen om Diabetes) has been developed as a partnership between the Center for Diabetes (City of Copenhagen), the University of Copenhagen and the Danish Diabetes Association. The scheme is one of several outcomes of the Cities Changing Diabetes Copenhagen (CCDC) campaign, which has brought together several different organisations. Cities Changing Diabetes is a global network and programme initiated by Novo Nordisk in 2014. Its overall aim is to help to identify the causes of the explosive rise in type 2 diabetes all over the world, and to put preventive measures in place.

Experiences from the scheme will also be shared across a variety of cities all over the world, to help us learn from one another's challenges and experiences. We are coming together on diabetes, both in Denmark and across the world.

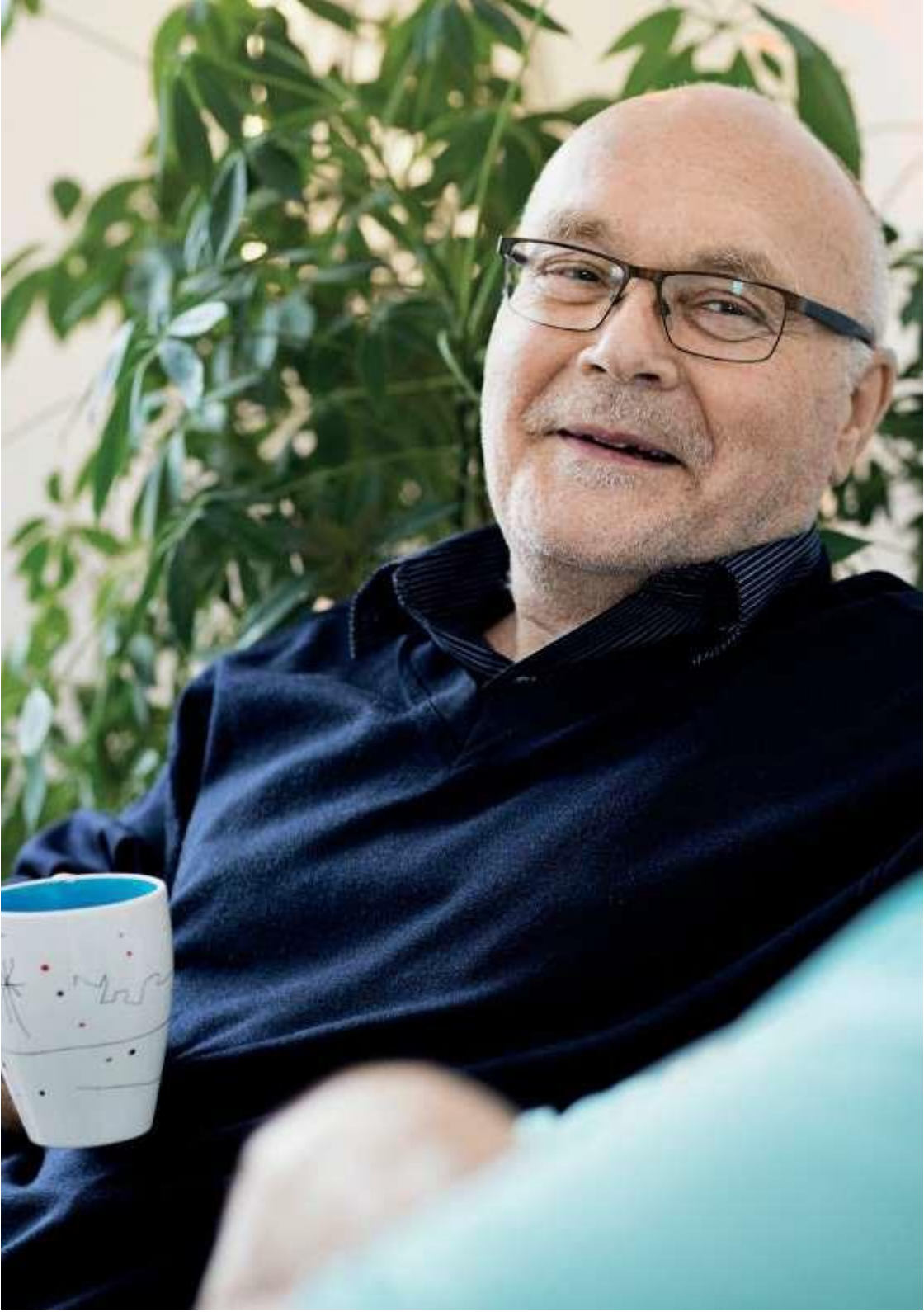
As a diabetes buddy, you make an invaluable difference to another person's life and daily routine, and the task also demands personal involvement in someone's life and wellbeing. We are proud of your contribution.

We hope this handbook will support you in your work as a diabetes buddy.
Happy reading.

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BEING A DIABETES BUDDY

Thank you for volunteering to be a diabetes buddy. You have become a diabetes buddy because you have experience of living with diabetes and understand the challenges that can crop up in day-to-day life. As a diabetes buddy, you have an opportunity to get to know another person and support them as part of a trusting relationship. The best basis for a good buddy partnership is to accept that you are different, respect each other and be interested and curious in the other person's life.

The project manager is the person who matches you with your diabetes buddy. The matching process focuses on finding the best match between your interests and situation and your buddy's needs.

Some relationships will go well from the outset, while others take more time to build trust, and some may never work perfectly. Unless you agree on your expectations about each other at the start, disagreements or challenges may crop up in the relationship. Chapter 2 provides ideas for agreeing on expectations at your first meeting.

If questions or challenges arise, please feel free to contact the project manager.

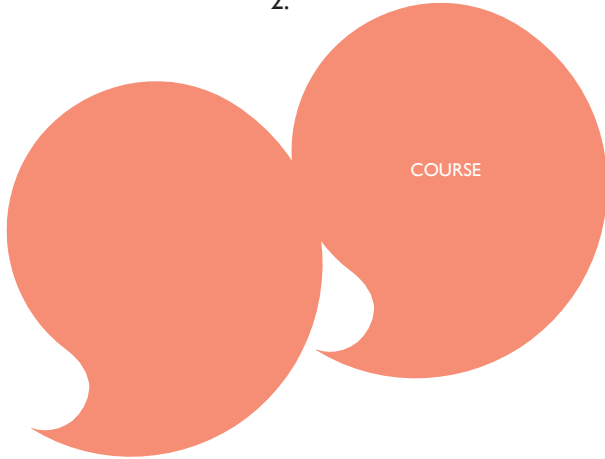
Your meetings with your buddy may involve in-depth conversations about what's happening with your buddy, but could also mean playing cards, going for walks and chatting about everything under the sun. Both types of meetings are equally good and justified. The unique thing about being a diabetes buddy is that you are the ones who decide what will happen, and both of you should enjoy the meet-ups. It may be a good idea to agree on what the next visit should be about each time you meet. Always be flexible if your buddy's needs have changed and they want to do something other than what was planned instead.

PREPARING FOR THE TASK

In order to be equipped for the task, diabetes buddies must work through the following four steps:

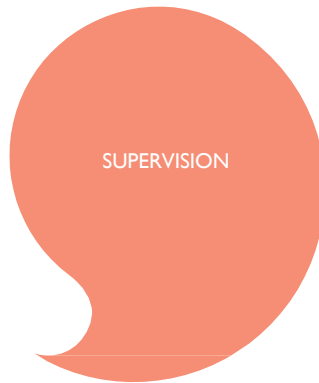
1.

2.



3.

4.



Information meeting:

All future diabetes buddies attend a two-hour information meeting, at which they will be introduced to Together on Diabetes, learn about who they can meet as a diabetes buddy, and receive information about the programme in general.

Course:

The mandatory course takes two days. Among other things, you will learn about how to become a better listener, the support person function and intersecting with the health service. Among other things, you will learn about how to listen, the support person function and intersecting with the health service. You will be introduced to a log book and learn about how to get other health professionals on board. We will also focus on being there for another person in practice, and how to look after yourself in the relationship.

Sharing experiences:

Every two months, you will be invited to share your experiences with other diabetes buddies. Relevant guidance will be available here, and you will have an opportunity to talk about your experiences.

Supervision:

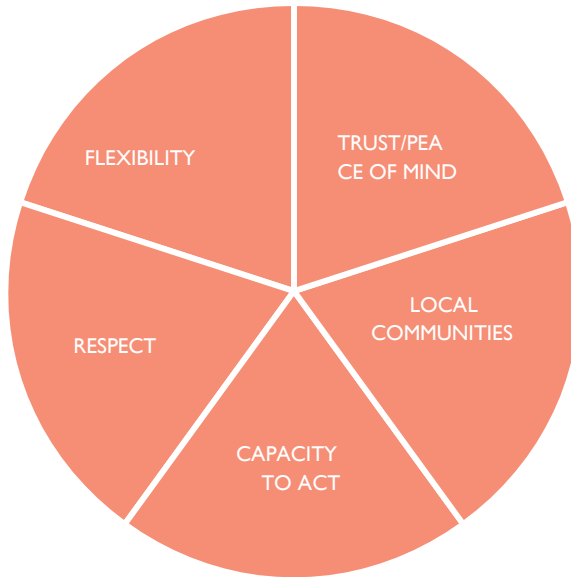
Twice a year you will talk to a trained supervisor, giving you an opportunity to raise any challenges that have arisen during the programme.

Insurance

As a volunteer, you are part of the Danish Diabetes Association's network of volunteers, and are insured.

Approaches to the role

In order to best support people with fewer resources, it is important that you consider the following topics in your approach to your buddy.



Trust/peace of mind:

Create clear, identifiable boundaries for the relationship. Each time, agree when you will meet next and what you will do. Know what you have to do if you need to change or cancel plans. Be explicit about your expectations regarding your time together, and be clear if you are experiencing any challenges.

Local communities:

Make contact with local activities to strengthen the feeling of being part of a community. Your buddy should eventually be able to manage without you. The best way to prepare for this is to do activities together with others, so that your buddy gradually becomes comfortable setting out alone.

Capacity to act:

Support your buddy in making positive changes to his or her life. Acknowledge small changes and help motivate your buddy to make positive changes, even when starting from scratch again.

Respect:

Always treat your buddy with respect and respect his or her choices. Never make decisions on your buddy's behalf. You can help him or her to make educated decisions, but remember that your buddy has to live with the decision afterwards.

Flexibility:

Meet your buddy where he or she is, and find a way forward that works for both of you.



THE DIABETES BUDDY PROGRAMME FROM START TO FINISH

Matching meeting:

A meeting between the project manager, you and your buddy. An agreement is reached regarding the partnership, programme and among other things, during the meeting you will agree how and when you will meet each other, where the future meetings will take place and what you will discuss. The meeting takes place either at the Diabetes Center for Diabetes or at your home.

Activities:

Social, practical or networking activities involving you and your buddy every two weeks for six months. At each meeting, you will agree on when to meet and what will happen next time.

End of programme:

Follow-up, evaluation and follow-up with the project manager, you and your buddy. The programme will be discussed during the final meeting.

NETWORK

Many people with diabetes enjoy meeting up with people in the same situation to share experiences. So be aware of local initiatives during the programme.

Motivational group programmes are found in various locations across Copenhagen. These offer people with diabetes and a food and exercise community for four to five months, helping to create healthy habits in daily life. For specific information, visit: diabetes.dk/motivationsgrupper.

The local association in Copenhagen also provides a network for people with diabetes. The local association events are available at: Koebenhavn.diabetes.dk, where you will also find a link to the local association's facebook page.

You can also find ideas for activities in your buddy's local area by searching for “Aktiv i København” (“Active in Copenhagen”), which lists clubs and activity centres in Copenhagen.

THE LOG BOOK

You have a log book to fill out after each meeting with your diabetes buddy. This applies both when you've met in person and when you have talked on the phone. The log book requires you to answer a few questions about your interaction. It takes about five minutes to fill it out.

Why? The log book should be viewed as a tool that gives the project manager an overview of how things are going, and whether you need her to contact you. It will also be included in anonymised form in the evaluation.

How? Once you are set up with your buddy, you will be sent a link to the logbook, which you can use each time you have met with or talked to your buddy. The log book and how to fill it out will be covered in the mandatory two-day course.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

As a diabetes buddy, you will become deeply involved in the life of another person. This means, for example, that you may be affected by his or her joys, worries and sorrows. If your buddy is worried or sad for a long period of time, this may affect your mood. It's natural to be influenced by the people we spend time with, but if you can't let go of these thoughts or if they are keeping you awake at night, please contact your project manager. It's always important to be aware of your own personal wellbeing. This helps you maintain a good relationship with your buddy while also looking after yourself.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

No money should change hands between you and your diabetes buddy. This can quickly cause unnecessary problems. The cost of an occasional coffee and so on can be covered by the Center for Diabetes for amounts in the region of up to DKK 400. Costs are refunded as follows: save the receipt and fill out a form, which must be signed and submitted to the project manager.



THE FIRST MEETING

The first time you meet your buddy is at the matching meeting. The project manager will also be present. It is important that you and your buddy meet each other on equal terms at this meeting. Start by saying a little about yourself and why you want to be a diabetes buddy. Think beforehand about what you want your buddy to know about you. Unlike you, your buddy has not been trained and perhaps isn't as prepared for this first meeting. Be curious and ask questions about your buddy's day-to-day life and past. Open questions, such as "How do you spend your days?", "Why did you decide to live in Copenhagen?" and "How has your week been?" are always a good way to learn about the person you are face to face with. As you and your diabetes buddy begin to build up a good relationship with one another, it is important that you communicate your expectations of one another.

The following topics may be used as inspiration for your first meeting:

What is a diabetes buddy? Clarify what you think about your role. Perhaps get your buddy to put into words his or her expectations of you as a diabetes buddy.

Practical matters: Does your buddy have preferences in regard to where and how often you meet? What happens if one person has to cancel? How will you contact each other? The project manager has given you a mobile phone to use to communicate with your buddy. Remember to exchange contact information such as mobile numbers and perhaps e-mails or addresses.

What happens during your meetings: How does your buddy want you both to spend the time? Are there topics that your buddy would rather not talk about? It's a good idea to explicitly say that you are meeting in a confidential space and you both have a duty of confidentiality. This may be important in order to improve trust.

Next of kin: Does your buddy feel you should be introduced to his or her next of kin? Remember that it is never your job to inform next of kin about matters relating to your buddy.

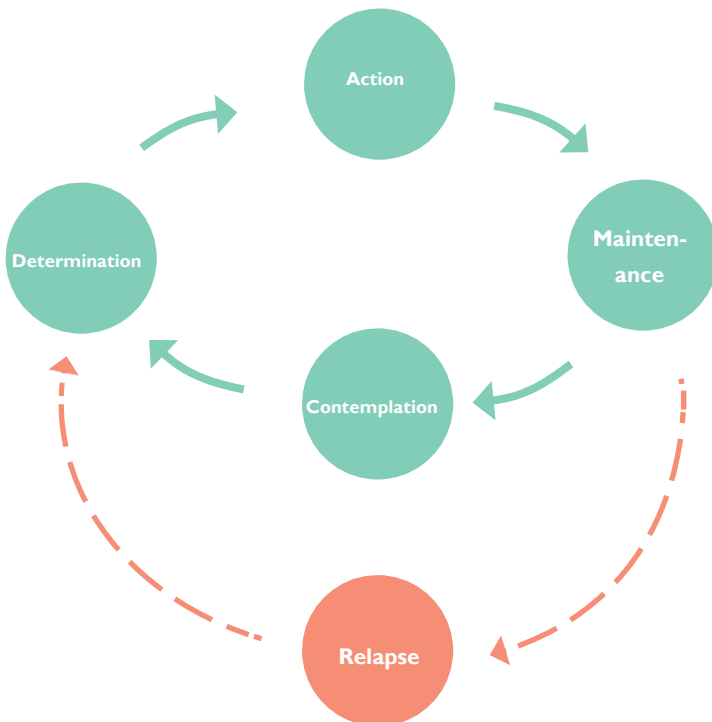
Honesty: Always try to be yourself and be honest about why you're doing what you're doing. You are a person with diabetes, just like your buddy, and this equality is important to your relationship.

Goals and dreams: As you get to know one another better, you can start to talk about what your buddy wants to get out of the programme. What things does he or she want to work on with you?

FOCUS ON YOUR BUDDY

It is important to focus on your buddy's needs and wishes regarding change. The challenges that you experience in regard to your diabetes are not necessarily the same as those faced by your buddy. As a diabetes buddy, you can't have all the answers to your buddy's challenges, and often your role will be to help him or her contact other professionals, such as doctors, home help, and so on.

The cycle of change



But you can ensure that you start with the resources your buddy already has available.

Work with your buddy to create situations and conversations in which your buddy can show his or her potential and experience success. It's important to start small here. Focus on little changes that your buddy can make in his or her day-to-day life. You will often be a kind of role model, so it's a good idea to get your buddy reflecting on habit change. Working on motivation for habit change will be an ongoing process for your buddy. The model below can help provide an overview of the stages that your buddy may go through during the process.

Known as the cycle of change, it consists of various stages that we all go through when trying to change a behaviour. The various stages are described below. They may provide inspiration as to the best way to support your buddy when he or she is going through each stage.

The contemplation stage: The person is considering changing behaviour, but is not ready to do anything about it yet. Ask about your buddy's previous experiences in this particular area. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the current behaviour, and especially, what are the advantages of changing the behaviour?

The determination stage: The person decides to make a change and starts to prepare for this. You can help them to set realistic interim and longer-term goals. You could perhaps try setting some small, achievable goals together.

The action stage: The person tries to modify the behaviour. Chat about what is working and why. Reinforce the positive steps your buddy is taking.

The maintenance stage: The person wants to continue by sustaining the changes he or she has made. You can support your buddy here by pointing out where there may be a risk of relapse, and how this can be avoided. Help your buddy to identify what and who can help to maintain the good behaviour.

The relapse stage: Your buddy may revert to the previous behaviour. You can help to motivate him or her to try to change the behaviour again. Express how difficult it is to change habits, and mention that the more times you try, the greater your chances of success.

It's important to be aware that relapses do not always occur when a person tries to change a behaviour. The modified behaviour can also be a stable, sustained change.

BUILDING BRIDGES

It is important for everyone to be part of social communities and to develop and evolve as part of these. As a diabetes buddy, one of your key roles is to help build bridges with other communities. The amount of support your buddy needs will change during the programme. The idea is that by the end of the programme, your buddy has become part of other new communities. So it's a good idea to talk about how you can discover new places and investigate new activities together – anything from local sports clubs to activities in the local area. You can also use Boblberg.dk to find new activities nearby. If you are looking for exercise activities specifically, try Sundhed.kk.dk/motion. This provides an overview of training options available in the Copenhagen area, along with information about prices, timetables, etc.



INTERSECTING WITH THE HEALTH SERVICE

As a diabetes buddy, it is a good idea to acquaint yourself with the options and services that are available from the health service. You should never provide advice on illness, but you can help by informing your buddy about relevant services that are available from the health service. For example, it may be useful to know what options are available for referrals, and perhaps chat to your buddy about his or her needs before an appointment with a GP. The following sections provide an overview of the various places where your buddy will come into contact with the health service, and where you can perhaps be involved as a support person. Read more about the support person function in Chapter 4. For ideas about other matters that are important when intersecting with the health service, visit Hej-sundhedsvaesen.dk.

SUNDHED.DK

You and your buddy can obtain personal information about medication and blood test results at Sundhed.dk.

OWN DOCTOR

As with your own care, your buddy's own doctor has overall responsibility for your buddy's diabetes treatment. People generally go for check-ups every three months, but this is agreed with the doctor from one appointment to the next. At the check-up, the patient typically has blood tests and their blood pressure may be checked. The patient's own doctor makes recommendations regarding relevant services that your buddy may benefit from. For example, a referral to a podiatrist or to a programme at the Center for Diabetes.

The Danish Diabetes Association has developed a “balance sheet”, which indicates how often checks should be performed and includes the ideal numbers for blood sugar and blood pressure. You can take this sheet along to consultations with a doctor so that you have some talking points.

Type 1 diabetes and type 2 diabetes

WHAT SHOULD BE CHECKED	HOW OFTEN	OPTIMAL NUMBERS
HbA1c (The target for HbA1c should be set based on an individual assessment)	Every 3–6 months	Type 1 diabetes: Below 53 mmol/mol Type 2 diabetes: Below 48 mmol/mol (below 58 mmol/mol with cardiovascular disease)
Blood pressure (The blood pressure target should be set based on an individual assessment)	Every 3–6 mon	Below 130/80 mmHg
LDL cholesterol	Annually	Below 2.5 mmol/l (below 1.8 mmol/l with cardiovascular disease)
Dental health/periodontal disease Kidney function Eye examination Foot check-up	Depending on diagnosis. Then by agreement Annually – or by agreement Annually	

Remember to have a chat about exercise, smoking, medication and healthy food with your treatment provider at least once a year.

DIABETES CLINICS

If your buddy has severe problems with his or her diabetes, he or she may be followed up via a diabetes clinic. If the condition is so advanced that your buddy develops late complications, it may also be relevant to be tracked in a diabetes clinic rather than by his or her own doctor. If your buddy has to start injecting insulin, his or her own doctor may also provide a referral to a clinic during the initial phase. At other times, the doctor handles this. It is normal to have several appointments when arriving at a clinic: for example, an appointment with a nurse first, followed by one with a doctor. It may be helpful to have a support person present, to make sure all information is communicated.

PODIATRIST

When you have diabetes, it's important to treat your feet well to avoid foot ulcers. A crucial aspect of prevention is regular contact with a licensed podiatrist. The podiatrist checks the sense of touch in the feet, the foot pulse, and provides guidance on how best to look after your feet.

Everyone with diabetes is entitled to an annual foot check-up, which is reimbursed by 50%. After the first visit, the podiatrist will then say whether additional visits are necessary. The Danish Health Authority recommends that people with type 2 diabetes see a podiatrist once a year. Most podiatrists carry out home visits if this is best for the patient.

You must be referred to a podiatrist by your GP.

OPHTHALMOLOGIST

The Danish Diabetes Association recommends an annual check-up with an ophthalmologist to prevent severe ocular damage. Some of the biggest causes of impaired sight in diabetics are conditions that are actually treatable. So it's important to keep your appointments with the ophthalmologist, as you may not notice the changes yourself. You do not need a referral to an ophthalmologist – your buddy can simply call and make an appointment.

DENTIST

When you have diabetes you are at greater risk of developing periodontal disease (gum disease), regardless of how well regulated your blood glucose is. Periodontal disease is a serious condition when you have diabetes, since it may be harder for sores in the mouth to heal. So it's important that you tell your dentist you have diabetes. Reimbursement options for dental treatment are limited, but you can apply for help under sections 82 and 82a of the Danish Active Social Policy Act. In practice, only people on low incomes can be reimbursed. The fact that you have diabetes and are therefore at greater risk of dental problems should count for something in your dentist's assessment of the reimbursement group in which you are placed: green, yellow or red. The Danish Health Authority introduced new reimbursement rules for dental treatment in 2015. The dentist now has to assess the individual's dental health and the individual can then apply for reimbursement depending on the group in which he or she is placed. It's always possible to ask another dentist for a second opinion if you disagree with your own dentist.

You belong to the green group when you do not have an active medical condition in your teeth, gums or oral cavity. You belong to the yellow group when you have an active medical condition in your teeth, gums or oral cavity, and are in a position to work with the dentist to improve your health situation. You belong to the red group when you have an active medical condition in your teeth, gums or oral cavity, and the dentist judges that you are not in a position to improve your dental health.

DIABETES TOOLS

If your buddy and his or her GP judge that regular blood sugar monitoring at home is required, section 112 of the Danish Act on Social Services allows the individual to apply for test materials. You can do this at Borger.dk under “Hjælpe midler”, and can apply for test strips, lancets, finger prickers and a blood glucose monitor. If your buddy is on tablets for diabetes, he or she can be reimbursed fully up to a maximum of 150 test strips, lancets and finger prickers. If your buddy is treated with insulin or Victoza, and therefore needs to inject him or herself, the amount of test materials that can be applied for is unlimited.

ADDITIONAL COSTS

If you have diabetes requiring insulin or substantially impaired functional capacity, you can apply for reimbursement of your additional costs that are necessary and directly associated with your diabetes, cf. section 100 of the Danish Act on Social Services. You must be aged between 18 and retirement age (and must not have been allocated a disability pension prior to 1 January 2013). The additional

costs for one year total around DKK 6,408 (2017). Examples of additional costs may be food, own payments for medication, fruit juice and glucose, transport to and from treatment and check-ups, or renewing your driving licence.

CITY OF COPENHAGEN: CENTER FOR DIABETES

If your buddy lives in the City of Copenhagen, he or she may be put on a programme at the Center for Diabetes. The Center provides guidance, advice and support for Copenhageners with type 2 diabetes. Depending on individual needs and motivation, a personal programme will be put together, which may include education, training, dietary guidance, support for stopping smoking or discussions about alcohol. An interpreter may be present for all programmes, and people are always welcome to bring their next of kin or a support person along to appointments. The Center is at Vesterbrogade 121. If you are interested in learning more about the Center, please visit www.diabetes.kk.dk or call +45 35 30 24 00. Patients who are interested in a programme at the Center for Diabetes must have a referral from their doctor.

HOME CARE

If your buddy does not have help in their day-to-day life, e.g. with taking medication, putting on or removing support socks or looking at a foot ulcer, help is available. Services can be arranged through the City of Copenhagen under either the Danish Act on Social Services or the Danish Health Act. Your buddy is responsible for contacting the local office, which will search for services.

IF YOUR BUDDY IS AGED UNDER 65

In the City of Copenhagen, your buddy can apply for practical assistance and support, food delivery, personal care and home nursing through the home-based care service. When an individual applies for support and assistance, the municipality's employees will decide, together with your buddy and potentially their next of kin or a support person, whether an aid or a short-term programme providing support, training and advice will help them manage as well as possible independently. If you have further questions, please contact the home-based care service on: 33 17 30 00.

IF YOUR BUDDY IS AGED OVER 65

If an individual feels they can no longer manage personal care or practical tasks, he or she can apply for assistance and support from one of the five local offices. Contact information and opening hours of all local offices can be found on the City of Copenhagen website: <https://www.kk.dk/artikel/hjemmepleje-til-%C3%A6ldre>

ON-SCREEN VISIT

As a supplement to the home help your buddy may already be receiving, people can now get what is known as an “on-screen visit”. This means they receive a screen which an employee from the municipality can call via video link. This type of “visit” can help your buddy get assistance and support quickly and easily – with taking medication, for example. An on-screen visit also means your buddy doesn't have to find transport to and from appointments with the health service, and the tablet can also be used for other things as well as on-screen visits, depending on your buddy's needs.

ADVICE

It's a jungle out there, and it can be difficult to find answers to your questions.

If you need answers to your questions and advice from professionals such as social workers, lawyers or nurses, you can call the Danish Diabetes Association's Telephone Advice Service. The number is available at Diabetes.dk.

Questions may be in regard to support for tools, complaints and appeals and help with working life. Experts can also advise you on asking your treatment providers the right questions and locating health service provision. If you have questions about laws and regulations, the lawyer can help. You can also talk to dieticians and exercise consultants about matters such as sweeteners, recipes, types of exercise and much more. Or you can hear from many people with experience of type 1 and type 2 diabetes, who can advise you on living with diabetes.

Ideas for questions when you are in contact with the health system:

- When should your buddy have another check-up? And how often?
- I'm newly diagnosed with type 2 diabetes – how do I get started?
- I have problems with my feet – how can I get help?
- How do I get my daily routine to work with diabetes?

- What are my numbers like? Are they where they should be? You can ask your doctor to print out the values, so you can have a chat about the numbers after your doctor's visit.
- What medication is your buddy taking in connection with diabetes – and what effect does it have?
- Is the current treatment regime still the best/most appropriate for your buddy?
- What do you do if you can't afford the medication? Are there benefits available?
- When do you get test results, and who should you call if the results don't arrive?
- Who should you contact if you experience pain or discomfort at home?



SUPPORT PERSON FUNCTION

As a diabetes buddy, you can help to ensure that your buddy has a good experience when they are in contact with the health service. Having someone with you can be helpful when you are receiving health-related information about diabetes. Agree your role in advance with your buddy. Are you there to listen, make notes or help ask the right questions? If you agree that you should act as a support person for appointments with the health service, it's a good idea to learn about what a support person is and what the law says on this issue.

WHAT IS A SUPPORT PERSON?

Basically, a support person is someone who helps someone say what they want to say. A key term in regard to a support person is “mastery”. This means that your buddy should always feel that he or she is in charge. As a support person, you should help ask relevant questions and ensure that your buddy can draw the right conclusions. Your buddy should feel like “I know this” and “I understood what was said”.

The most important thing to remember as a support person is that even being present during an appointment is hugely valuable. You are providing another set of eyes and ears, and can hopefully make your buddy feel he or she is not alone. Before the appointment, your buddy should consider whether it is okay for you, as a support person, to be informed of the things that may come to light during the appointment.

As a support person, you can provide help before, during and after appointments with the health service.

BEFORE THE APPOINTMENT

As a support person, you can help to prepare your buddy for the appointment. Asking your buddy open questions can help them reach greater clarity before the appointment.

Suggested questions:

- Suggested questions:
- What's this about?

- What deadlines are involved?
- What is important to your buddy before the appointment?
- What is your buddy worried about?
- What is the most important thing your buddy wants to get out of the appointment?
- What are your buddy's interests?
- Or a leading question: "Is it important that we talk about ... or would you rather discuss ...?"
- "Does that mean when we go into this appointment you want to hear about ...?"

Clarifying matters before the appointment helps your buddy to say and ask the right things during the appointment. As a support person, you can also help your buddy to read through documents before the appointment. Your buddy will often have received a letter or invitation before the appointment. It can lessen anxiety about the appointment if your buddy is prepared and clear about what the appointment involves.

DURING THE APPOINTMENT

During the appointment, as a support person you can help your buddy to ask the right questions. As a support person, you do not speak for your buddy, but you can help to move the appointment forward. For example, you could ask clarifying questions like, "Please could you explain that?" Or by using yes/no questions at the end of the appointment: "So (person) needs to start taking cholesterol-lowering medication from now on?" Yes/no questions are helpful when making decisions and drawing or repeating conclusions about things that have been unclear.

AFTER THE APPOINTMENT

After the appointment, as a support person you can help to talk through the appointment properly and thus help your buddy's recall. The following questions may be used as inspiration for this chat:

- How did the appointment go?
- Did we understand what was said?
- Are we clear about what is going to happen now?
- What do we do to follow up?

LEGISLATION

As a support person, it's important to know a little about legislation – primarily in regard to people's rights as citizens. Under the Danish Public Administration Act, all citizens have the right to request access to public records. This means you can write to the municipality, doctor or hospital and ask to be sent all documents regarding your case. It may be that information is missing, and if so you are always entitled to submit additional information, such as a medical report. This is known as a consultation procedure. As a support person, you play an important role in helping your buddy to read through any decisions. You are always have the right to file a complaint, and in this respect it is important to know that the deadline of four weeks for lodging a complaint or appeal only starts when your buddy has been informed of his or her right to complain or appeal.

As a support person, it is helpful to know that the municipality always has a duty to record and provide guidance. You can help to make your buddy aware of the importance of notifying the municipality about this. The duty to record means that the municipality must always keep records about the case. The duty to provide guidance means the municipality

is obliged to offer guidance on the services that are available. If your buddy can describe a need, the administration is obliged to investigate which services can help. “Are there other options?” can be a good question to ask here.

The Centre for Voluntary Social Work provides more information about the function of a support person. For example, there is a “Dictionary for support persons”. In other words, you don't need to be a lawyer to be a support person, but you should be good at trusting your gut. If you don't understand what is said, it's highly likely that your buddy doesn't either, so it's always better to ask.



DAY-TO-DAY LIFE AND MENTAL HEALTH

While you and your buddy are both living with a chronic condition, that isn't necessarily the most important thing in your day-to-day lives. To support your buddy as well as possible, it's a good idea to chat about all the other things that life may involve.

Living with diabetes affects life both physically and mentally. Often there's a lot of emphasis on the physical aspects of diabetes – medication, monitoring, food and exercise. This means that more complex issues such as mental health challenges sometimes take a back seat.

Diabetes requires energy, care, planning and insight – qualities that are sometimes in short supply for people who aren't doing so well. Your mental wellbeing strongly affects the quality of your life with diabetes.

We are all different, and we all respond differently to diabetes. The vast majority of people live well with their diabetes for the vast majority of the time. But the mental health aspects are important to be aware of, because there is a correlation between diabetes and mental health/wellbeing.

Diabetics are twice as likely to get anxiety, stress and depression. You can read more about how to get help with mental health problems at diabetes.dk: <https://diabetes.dk/diabetes-1/diabetes-og-psyken.aspx>

As a diabetes buddy, the best thing you can do is listen, hold space and signal that sadness, anxiety and stress are understandable when you have diabetes. You can also support your buddy in talking to the doctor about it.

The following exercise may be used as inspiration to help express some of the topics that can be difficult to put into words. You may also touch upon completely different topics.

BALANCE EXERCISE

The following balance sheets from Steno Diabetes Center Copenhagen may help to clarify things for your buddy by putting into words the imbalance he or she may feel. In other words, the sheets can help initiate a chat between you and your buddy, which may help your buddy to identify challenges – and thereby opportunities for change. Perhaps try spreading the cards out on a table and asking your buddy to pick the one that resonates the most for him or her at the moment.



MY DAY

Another exercise you can use to talk about day-to-day life is the “My day” exercise. This exercise gives your buddy permission to talk about day-to-day life, starting with a completely ordinary day. Relevant information or situations may come up which your buddy might not otherwise have thought of. For example, perhaps your buddy gets up several times a night due to pain or increased urination. A relevant situation that your buddy should act on by contacting his or her GP.

The mere fact of finding solutions to a particular problem will be a great learning experience for your buddy. So bear in mind that a key aspect of your role as a diabetes buddy is to help your buddy help him or herself. The more your buddy takes action and deals with things, the better their self-belief, which is crucial to their ability to manage in the long-term.

Afternoon

Evening

Morning

Night



EXERCISE AND FOOD

In order to live a good life with diabetes, it's important to look after yourself. It's hard to change your way of living from one day to the next. It's here that you can work with your buddy to make small, positive changes. Some people do best by taking small steps, while others prefer to start “a whole new life” straight off. Talk to your buddy about the good experiences he or she has had when making positive changes earlier in life.

EXERCISE

When you have diabetes, it's important to have an active life. It can seem a bit daunting to throw yourself into new forms of exercise, and there may be many reasons why your buddy is not active. But remember that all forms of exercise that increase your heart rate and make you breathe faster cause the blood sugar to fall and prevent the development of late complications. Perhaps you could suggest taking walks together. If you want to get more out of the walk, it can be good to switch between walking slowly and quickly, i.e. incorporating intervals.

Incorporating intervals into walks makes you more out of breath, which also exercises the heart. It also means you can be satisfied with exercising for shorter periods but get the same benefits. As well as the plethora of physical benefits of being active, exercise also has a positive effect on our mental health. Exercising during the day means we sleep better at night, have more energy for our daily tasks, and are in a better mood. We are more in touch with our bodies and may have a greater sense of wellbeing.

If your diabetes buddy simply isn't used to moving around, just a few small changes to the daily routine can bring great benefits. For example, you could invent simple exercises based on your buddy's daily routine – like getting up from the sofa or moving their most commonly used kitchen tools around, so that cooking requires a little more physical activity.

EXERCISE CHALLENGES

Many people find it tough to get started with exercising and being active. Reading and picking out a few quotations about challenges can help you be aware of the attitudes and emotions that are relevant to you both as individuals when it comes to exercising and being active. The quotations reflect mental, social and practical aspects of exercising and being active.

“I'm just not the kind of person who's good at sport and things like that...”

“I'm a bit lazy, actually...”

“I just don't know why I an't get started...”

“Exercise is fun at the start, but then I lose interest...”

“I don't know anyone who exercises...”

“I need someone to chase me with a whip...”

“If I'm going out alone, I can easily find lots of excuses...”

“I'm really busy with other things in my life at the moment...”

“I don't need to exercise...”

“I get frightened when I feel my heart beating like that...”

“It's fantastic to move my body and get my heart rate up...”

“It always hurts somewhere, no matter what exercise I'm doing...”

“I can't exercise because of my pain...”

“It's hard to get going again if I lose the rhythm...”

“I just don't know how to get started...”

FOOD

It's good to eat healthily when you have diabetes. Healthier food provides more energy, and the healthier lifestyle can help you get your blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol under control. The following Keyhole label, plate models, shopping card and blood glucose model are intended to provide inspiration for a healthier lifestyle.

THE KEYHOLE LABEL

The Keyhole label is the official nutritional label of the Danish Ministry of Environment and Food, which makes it easier to quickly identify healthy foods and meals when shopping, eating out or using recipes. Choosing foods with the Keyhole label means the manufacturer has met various requirements in regard to fat, sugar, salt or dietary fibre content. Have a chat to your buddy about the label. Is it something your buddy keeps an eye out for on a daily basis? If not, why not?

SHOPPING CARD

The Danish Diabetes Association has produced a shopping card for use when you are shopping. It can be useful to spend a bit of time learning to read the nutrition declaration. The shopping card makes it easy to figure out the maximum recommended amounts of carbohydrate, sugar and fat in a particular product. It also provides an overview of sweeteners that do not cause blood sugar to rise.

NUTRITIONAL CONTENT PER 100 G/100 ML

	Max. carbohydrates	Max. fat	Min. dietary fibre
Fruit juice per 100 ml drink	2 g	–	–
Sodas and soft drinks per 100 ml drink	1 g	–	–
Drinking chocolate	6 g	0.7 g	–

NUTRITIONAL CONTENT PER 100 G/100 ML

	Max. carbohydrates	Max. sugars	Max. fat	Min. dietary fibre
Rye bread, crispbread	–	5 g	7 g	8 g
Wholegrain bread, rolls	–	5 g	7 g	5 g
Cereal products	–	13 g	7 g	8 g
Milk, soured dairy products	6 g	–	0.7 g	–

PLATE MODELS

It's not only about what you eat, but also how much. The plate model can be used as inspiration for how different foods can be divided up on the plate. You can use the plate model to talk about portion sizes and the foods that take up the most space on the plate. As shown in Figure 1, vegetables and salads should fill two-fifths of the plate. Carbohydrates such as bread, potatoes, pasta and rice should fill another two-thirds, and meat should fill one-fifth of the plate.

This applies if you want to keep your weight as it is. If you are interested in losing weight, on the other hand, vegetables should fill half the plate, with carbohydrates and protein taking up a quarter each, as shown in Figure 2. Diabetes.dk is a good source of videos about cooking, recipes and other tips.

Figure 1

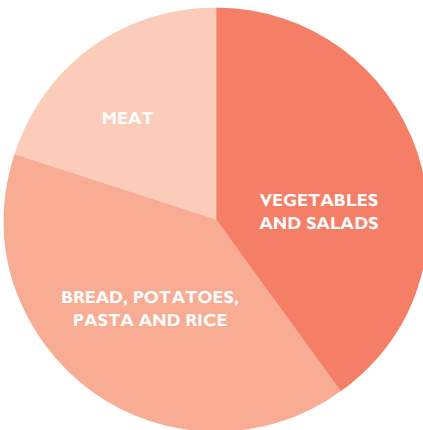
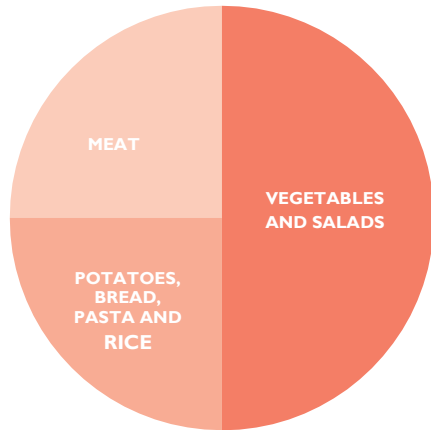








Figure 2



BLOOD GLUCOSE MODEL

Blood glucose values

MORNING			EVENING		
					
1 – 2 – 3	4 – 5 – 6 – 7	8 – 9 – 10	11 – 12 – 13 – 14 – 15		
Blood glucose too low	Fasting blood glucose	Non-fasting blood glucose	Elevated blood glucose		
	Well-controlled	Well-controlled			

For some people it's a good idea to measure your blood glucose regularly for a while, in order to get more of a sense of how your body reacts. The above model provides an overview that can be used to prompt a chat about optimal blood glucose levels.

Your blood glucose is fine if it is between 4 and 7, both fasting and non-fasting. Your blood glucose level will fluctuate during the day; this is quite normal. Blood glucose is affected by many things, such as what you eat, how active you are and the medication you take. This means your non-fasting blood glucose level is still fine if it goes up to between 7 and 9. Blood glucose should be measured 1½ hours after a meal, and the number should be less than 9.

The reason why we talk a lot about blood glucose levels and why they should be within the “green” range is to prevent the development of late complications. So it's always a good idea to chat to your doctor if your blood glucose is often in the red range (11 and above). It may mean your medication needs to be adjusted, for example.

If your blood glucose is between 1 and 3, that is too low, and it is important to eat a little food. A piece of fruit or a glass of fruit juice will cause your blood glucose level to rise quickly, while it is also important to get some energy and plenty of dietary fibre to stabilise the blood glucose, so it doesn't drop quickly again. For example, a slice of rye bread.



THE END OF THE PROGRAMME

The Diabetes Buddy Programme runs for a set period of six months. You, your buddy and the project manager will review the programme together at one final appointment.

An important objective of the programme is that, as a diabetes buddy, you become increasingly unnecessary to your buddy as time goes by. In conclusion, it will be a good idea to chat about the networks and activities your buddy will continue to be involved with once the programme is over. These should be activities or networks that you have already tried out together. If your buddy wants to look for new networks, it may be useful to agree specifically whom your buddy will contact, how, when, and so on.

You and your buddy have been together for six months, and it's a good idea to start to reflect on the programme as it nears its conclusion. As well as the appointment with the project manager, you may need to talk through the programme together. This can be an informal chat, or perhaps you want to mark or celebrate it. Talk to your buddy about what feels right to you.

The following exercises may be used to evaluate the programme:

TIME TRAVEL:

Travel back over the programme together with your buddy.

- What happened the first time you met?
- What were your initial impressions of each other?
- How did you get started?
- How did you spend your time together?
- Where are you both now?

GENERAL REFLECTIONS:

- What was good about the programme?
- What was most important to you about the programme? (Could be various things)
- Where have you seen the biggest changes? Where can you see changes in your day-to-day life?

- What was the most fun/the hardest/most surprising thing?
- What did you learn the most from?
- Do you have any advice for each other?
- What in particular can you carry into the future? To your buddy: Who could help you to ensure this in future?

