

Feeling Overwhelmed?

Support for Persons Newly Diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes

Adjusting to a diagnosis of Type 1 diabetes is challenging. For many people with Type 1 diabetes and their families, the diagnosis comes as a surprise. There are often few warning signs and in many cases, first symptoms and diagnosis will happen very quickly. There is a lot of information and many changes to adjust to in a very short period of time. Emotionally, this can be very difficult to cope with. You may feel in shock, overwhelmed, angry, bewildered, numb, sad, scared, or a mix of these and other emotions. Regardless of how you're feeling, know that you are not alone and there are many supports and tools to help you. Below are some points to keep in mind as you adjust to your new diagnosis:

- 1. You can get through this.** A diagnosis of diabetes is not the end of the world; it is the start of something new. It involves learning new habits, which can be hard work but these new things are possible to learn and do. It's very important to give yourself time to adjust to these changes. You don't have to feel okay with having diabetes before you get started on changes, nor do you have to change everything at once. Focus on doing what you can and being kind to yourself. Seek out information and supports to help you (see point #6).
- 2. It isn't your fault.** You may be wondering, "why did this happen to me?" or if there is something you could have done to prevent getting diabetes. There are many misconceptions about causes of Type 1 diabetes. It's important to remember that the causes of Type 1 diabetes are not well understood and people of all backgrounds, cultures, and lifestyles can get it. Seeking to blame (yourself or another person or thing) is a common reaction, but it's not a particularly helpful one and tends to make you feel worse. Try to focus your energy on learning more about what you can do now to live a healthy life.
- 3. You are not alone.** There are many outlets and channels to get involved and meet other people living with Type 1 diabetes (see links below or talk to your diabetes care team). Connecting with others who have diabetes can be a helpful way to learn, share ideas, and feel supported.
- 4. You are more than diabetes.** Diabetes is something that you have but it does not define or limit you. You can live a normal life with diabetes – and even an extraordinary one! There are many professional athletes, scientists, actors, musicians, etc.! that live and thrive with their diabetes. If you were to meet these people you may not even know they had diabetes. In fact, you have probably met people with Type 1 diabetes and didn't even know it.
- 5. Diabetes IS manageable.** You can live a healthy and full life with diabetes. Adjusting to the lifestyle changes that come with diabetes can be challenging, but it also presents an opportunity to learn more about your health and to improve your health habits. By becoming an advocate for yourself and working with your diabetes care team, you can live a very healthy and active lifestyle. And the future of diabetes is very hopeful - we live in an age where health technology and treatment advances are moving faster than ever. New innovations for diabetes are constantly being developed and improving the way diabetes is managed. Speak to your diabetes care team and make use of the technologies, supports, and tools available to help you.
- 6. Get support.** People can have different experiences adjusting to a diagnosis of Type 1 diabetes, but for everyone, diabetes is too much to do alone. It is very important to seek out the information and support you need to help you manage your diabetes. Stay connected

with friends and family and, if you feel comfortable, talk with them about your diabetes. There are many health care providers (HCPs) with expertise to help you, including your family physician and diabetes care team (endocrinologist, nurse, dietitian, social worker, psychologist, pharmacist, podiatrist, eye doctor). These HCPs are there to work with you, support you, and direct you to resources that can help you live a healthy and full life with diabetes.

For more information, check out the following links:

- **JDRF:** <http://www.jdrf.ca/living-with-t1d/newly-diagnosed/>
- **Canadian Diabetes Association:** <http://www.diabetes.ca/diabetes-and-you/living/just-diagnosed/type1/>
- **Positive Diabetes blog:** <http://positivediabetes.com/blog/>

July 2013