

A pocket guide for the patient with newly diagnosed diabetes

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Q: I routinely have only a short period of time in which to teach my patients who've been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, and I sometimes find it difficult to drill down to the basics. Do you have any suggestions for creating a primer on essential facts and skills?

A: In today's world of shortened hospital stays, patients with newly diagnosed type 2 diabetes (if admitted at all) are allowed little time to learn important facts and skills to keep themselves healthy and safe at home. Keeping this in mind, a concise care plan, which can be completed in a short period of time, needs to be utilized. This care plan will give your patient the basic information and skills he needs to safely care for himself until he's able to attend a more inclusive diabetes education class.

Patients with newly diagnosed type 2 diabetes have a unique set of needs relating to education about their condition. Here's what you need to teach your patient before he's discharged from the hospital:

- a basic understanding of type 2 diabetes
- an overview of the prescribed medication, including proper use, peak time, and length of action (Instruction on the proper disposal of sharps is needed if your patient has been prescribed insulin injections.)

- the purpose of a glucose meter, instruction in its use and care, how often your patient needs to check his blood glucose level, and an understanding of how to record blood glucose levels in a log book for use in care-making decisions
- his target blood glucose level (as determined by the healthcare provider) and at what level he should call the healthcare provider for glucose excursions
- an overview of hypoglycemia and hyperglycemia, their causes, and how to recognize, treat, and prevent these conditions
- basic dietary facts and a copy of his prescribed diet (This basic information will serve as a starting point until your patient can schedule a consult with a dietitian.)
- an understanding of the need for ketone testing and how to perform it, if applicable.

In conclusion, we as nurses must make time to give our patients with newly diagnosed type 2 diabetes the basic knowledge and skills to understand their condition and care for themselves. By presenting facts that are relevant to them, we can provide a wealth of information in the short time allotted. ■

Learn more about it

American Diabetes Association. National standards for diabetes self-management education. <http://www.diabetes.org/uedocuments/erp-national-standards-revised-0707.pdf>.

Gattullo BA, Edelman M. Patient education series. Diabetes. *Nursing2008*. 2008;38(11):31-32.

Brush up on the basics.

