

Why see a diabetes educator?



Sandy Koropas, R.N., Diabetes Nurse Educator
Recently recognized as Manitoba's Outstanding Health Professional by the Canadian Diabetes Association for her work with diabetes patients

I have been a diabetes educator for over 15 years and I have made many changes in how I deliver information. The biggest is that I won't tell people with diabetes what they need to do. I know, from my years of experience, that people with diabetes tolerate what health care professionals have to tell them, they will listen, they will ask questions, but ultimately they will make their own choices.

I'll give you the knowledge you need to self-manage your disease. There are many misconceptions about diabetes out there and there is no shortage of diabetes related information. We have books, cookbooks, magazine, websites and even diabetes specialized aisles in our grocery stores. Unfortunately, not all information is correct and some is flat out wrong.

Here are a few questions for you to consider:

- As long as I feel OK my blood sugar doesn't really matter.
- Sugar-free foods are the best choice for my diabetes control.
- The bad diabetes is when you need to take insulin, isn't it?
- I ate too much sugar when I was a kid, so that's why I have diabetes right?
- I don't really think I have true diabetes, I heard there was a borderline, right?
- When you have "brittle diabetes" you have to test your blood sugar, right?
- You can tell what your sugar is by the way that you feel, right?

If you have answered "true" to any of these or if you are unsure how to answer, you should speak with a diabetes educator.

People who attend our diabetes education classes tell me they had been told, time and time again, that their blood sugars are out of control, they need to lose weight, and they need to exercise. They are also very aware of what the complications of diabetes are. Often, what they don't know is what they can do to feel better. When you self-manage your diabetes, we can focus on your needs and your goals to help you feel better and live healthier. In our group sessions, you'll find tremendous power in speaking with someone in a situation similar to you. You'll learn by sharing, hearing, seeing and participating in discussions. Many people, after attending one of our classes, said they were hesitant about attending but they were so happy they did because they enjoyed the group. They learned much more than expected, especially from other people in the group who shared the very same struggles and denials.

I know people learn best when they take an active role in their own treatment and are given the tools and support they need to take full responsibility for successful self management of their disease. So write down your questions and your concerns. Sign up for a Community Wellness Team class and then work with us to clear up misconceptions. Start working on your self-management plan and stop feeling guilty about not getting your blood sugar under control.