

diabetes etiquette

FOR
PARENTS

what your TEEN would like you to know

A special note to parents: Being a parent to a teen with Type 1 diabetes can be a tough, frustrating job. You must walk a difficult path between taking good care of your teen while also encouraging independence. You need to care, but not care too much.

We hope this card will give you and your teen some new ideas about how to survive diabetes together. No need to follow all of these etiquette points and give yourself a pat on the back if you are doing any of them!

- 1 Make the effort to understand diabetes from my point of view**
If you don't have diabetes, you can't possibly know what I am going through. The reality is that diabetes is unfair, inconvenient, a lot of work, and it sucks. No need to cheer me up, or to tell me that it could be worse. You don't have to fix it; instead, just listen when I need to vent or complain.
- 2 Stop trying to scare me with diabetes statistics**
You've told me a million times that many years of high blood sugars can hurt me. I understand YOU are scared and want the best for me, but bugging me about complications just makes me want to tune you out. If I need motivation, it has to be something important to me right now, not way down the road.
- 3 When my blood sugars are high, don't assume I've done something stupid (although I may have)**
It may be hard to believe, but sometimes it really isn't my fault. Blood sugars can get whacky even when you do everything right. Instead of grilling me about why they are high (which may have no answer), or what I might've done wrong, let's figure out what to do now.
- 4 Please acknowledge when I'm doing something right, not just when I've messed up**
You may not notice it, but taking care of diabetes is a lot of hard work. And it is not fun! I may not be perfect, but there are a lot of things I am doing right every day just to stay alive. A pat on the back for a job well done would be awesome.
- 5 Don't always be in my face about diabetes, but don't leave me completely alone with it either**
I know this is a touch balance. I don't want to be constantly hassled about what I should be doing. I need to handle diabetes more on my own. Still, though I hate to admit it, I am glad to know you've "got my back." Let's figure out where you can trust me to do things on my own and where I could still use your involvement.
- 6 Don't tell everyone about my diabetes, especially not during the first minute you meet them**
Do you have any idea how embarrassing this is? I know you mean well, but my goal is to fit in, not stick out. Everybody does not have to know. Give me a chance to let me tell people about diabetes when I am ready to do so.
- 7 Recognize that I am never going to be perfect with my diabetes care, no matter how much you want this**
I know it can make you nervous when you see a high blood sugar reading or notice that I haven't made the best food choice, but let's get real. No one can manage diabetes perfectly. I'll do my best (and yes, maybe I need to do even better) but I also need to have a life.
- 8 Don't limit my activities based on diabetes**
If you do, people may see me as fragile, sick, or think something is wrong with me. I can do anything those without diabetes can do, though it may require some creative problem solving. Sports, sleepovers, traveling, and parties are all things that can be done safely. Support me in figuring out a way to make it all possible.
- 9 Don't be the food police**
Yes, I make choices that you don't like (and sometimes aren't so smart). But trying to control what I eat isn't going to help; instead I'll just do my best to avoid YOU when I eat. Remember that good diabetes control is doable even if you don't eat healthy stuff all the time.

