

HAVING “THE TALK” (with Friends and Roommates)

Chances are they will want to learn more about what diabetes is and how they can help you.

Struggling to explain to your friends why you have a ‘pager’ on your waist? Moving in with someone new? Or maybe you’ve been living with the same people for a while and you haven’t gotten around to anything past, “Sorry for the test strip you found in your shoe the other day.”

The bottom line is that it’s really important for the people around you to know (and understand) your diabetes. While it’s normal to be self-conscious sometimes, just remember that your diabetes and all of the gadgets that come along with it make you unique—and your friends will probably think it’s kind of cool. Let us help you start the conversation.

THINGS TO EXPLAIN

Type 1 diabetes

There are A LOT of people who don’t understand what diabetes is or the difference between type 1 and type 2. Try something like the description below, or practice a version that feels right to you.

“The pancreas produces insulin, which helps to convert sugar, starches, and other food into energy. My pancreas doesn’t work so I have to measure insulin to put into my body myself. I am able to do that using [your insulin delivery method]. It’s not an exact science, so that means I have to constantly monitor my blood sugar to make sure it isn’t too low or too high and make adjustments when it is.”

“There is really nothing that I can’t do or eat. I just have to do a bit more planning.”

For ‘The Talk’ We Suggest:

✓ Use humor to help diffuse any tension you feel about telling your friend about diabetes.

✓ Feel comfortable and confident in what you’re telling them. The more comfortable you are talking about it, the more comfortable they are going to feel about it!
✓ Start simple! Then add details from there.

What Happens if Blood Sugar is Too High/Low

It’s crucial for your friends to understand and recognize what being high and low looks like. Be sure to explain your personal symptoms so they can provide assistance if necessary.

“When my blood sugar is high it means that there is too much sugar in my body. I may be thirsty, aggravated, tired, or confused. I treat it by taking more insulin. When this happens I don’t feel well and may want to relax until I feel better.”

“When my blood sugar is low it means that I don’t have enough sugar in my body. I may start feeling tired, confused, dizzy, or sweat a lot. I treat it by eating or drinking something with fast-acting sugar in it like juice or glucose tabs. When this happens I don’t feel well and may not want to talk much until my blood sugar rises again.”

How Friends Can Help

Even if you’ve never had a diabetes-related emergency where you’ve needed help before, you need to explain this part to your friends—just in case.

“I (haven’t/have) had a serious low blood sugar when I was too low to treat it myself. That being said, you should know to call 911 if this were to happen (again).”

Keep in mind that Glucagon may cause nausea. If Glucagon is used, make sure people know to keep you on your side to avoid aspiration. If vomiting occurs, call 911 immediately.

What Else They Can Do (also, maybe what they shouldn’t)

What you share depends entirely on you and how you feel. Here are just a few suggestions based on conversations we’ve had with other young adults with diabetes.

DO

- DO ask if I need anything when my sugar is going low
- DO ask me questions about diabetes when you are curious
- DO treat me the same way you treat your other friends
- DO respect my feelings about diabetes

DON'T

- DON'T ask me “should you be eating that?”
- DON'T look at/comment negatively on my blood sugars