DIABETES
BLACK PATIENT JOURNEY

CHEAT SHEET

What you need to know

- Diabetes is manageable with the right care and understanding.
- The condition affects how your body produces or uses insulin, which converts sugar into energy.
- There are three main types of diabetes:
  - Type 1: The body doesn't make any insulin.
  - Type 2: The body doesn't make enough insulin.
  - Prediabetes: A warning stage that increases the risk of developing Type 2.
- Knowing your type of diabetes is essential for proper treatment and lifestyle changes.
- Regular doctor check-ups provide ongoing support and help you stay on track toward a healthy life.

Questions to ask your doctor

- Managing diabetes requires teamwork between you and your doctor.
- Early on, you'll discuss treatment options, frequency of visits, and equipment for testing blood sugar.
- You'll also need to understand the signs of high or low blood sugar and any lifestyle changes to make.
- As treatment continues, keep asking important questions such as:
  - What are the side effects of this treatment?
  - Should I be concerned about interactions with my other medications?
  - Will anything change about how often I check my blood sugar levels?
  - Do I need to change my diet or exercise routine?
  - Should I be concerned about developing any other chronic illnesses?
  - Can you check that everything else is okay?

How to get the treatment you need

- African Americans with diabetes may not always receive the best medications, follow-up tests, or related screenings (such as for vision problems).
- Getting proper care means asking the right questions and, if necessary, finding a doctor who truly listens.
- Switching doctors during treatment may feel uncomfortable, but your health should always come first.
- Affording medication and supplies can be challenging, but financial and support resources are available.
- The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) website offers helpful tools and information.
- Clinical trials can provide access to new and effective treatments, but your doctor must help determine if you qualify.

What to expect once you start treatment

- Prediabetes usually does not require medication and can often be reversed through diet changes and regular exercise.
- Type 1 diabetes is treated with insulin therapy, which may include fast-acting insulin for emergencies and long-acting insulin for daily management.
- Type 2 diabetes treatment depends on how well blood sugar is controlled through healthy eating and physical activity. If lifestyle changes aren't enough, medication will be prescribed.
- Diabetes medications can cause side effects such as nausea, bloating, diarrhea, weight gain, joint pain, and an increased risk of bone fractures.
- If other chronic illnesses develop, your doctor will prescribe additional medications to manage those conditions as well.

Getting your diabetes under control

- Take medications exactly as prescribed and follow recommended lifestyle changes to manage diabetes effectively.
- There's no strict "diabetes diet," but focus on fresh fruits, whole grains, and high-fiber foods while limiting refined sugars, processed meats, starchy foods, and refined grains.
- Maintain a regular exercise routine to help control blood sugar and improve overall health.
- Stay in communication with your doctor if you develop another chronic illness, become pregnant, or notice your medication isn't working as well.
- Some people with Type 2 diabetes may eventually need insulin therapy, depending on how their condition progresses.
- Keep up with vaccinations to reduce the risk of infections that can complicate diabetes management.

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