

Matters of the Heart: Support a Loved One with Diabetes

By the [National Diabetes Education Program](#)

Diabetes is a hard disease to handle alone. Whether it's helping your sweetheart manage diabetes or easing the burden a family member or friend with diabetes may feel, you want the best for them. If your sweetheart is one of the nearly 21 million Americans with diabetes, you can make a big difference in how well he or she manages the disease by following these tips from the National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP).

Help your sweetheart avoid a *broken heart*. People with diabetes are at an increased risk for heart attack and stroke – the No. 1 cause of early death among people with the disease. However, research shows that the key to reducing the risk of heart attack and stroke in people with diabetes is to manage the **ABCs** – as measured by the **A1C** test, **B**lood pressure, and **C**holesterol – three of the major risk factors for heart disease. Good diabetes care includes managing the ABCs of diabetes to help avoid having a heart attack, a stroke, or other problems.

Understand your sweetheart's diabetes. Each person's experience with diabetes is different. Learn about living well with diabetes – attend a class, search online, or ask a health care professional. Find out what your sweetheart needs by asking what things are hard for him or her to manage and what things are easy.

Get help. Diabetes affects you too, so talk to your sweetheart about how you can work together to make managing diabetes a positive part of your relationship. Find a diabetes support group online or in the health section of the newspaper. If your sweetheart is sad or depressed, ask a health care professional about ways to get help.

Offer practical support. Prepare a healthy, candle-lit meal by baking, broiling, or grilling an entrée that is low in saturated fats, *trans* fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars. Be active together by taking a romantic walk in the park or around town and work up to 30 to 60 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week. Involve your family in a variety of physical activity by joining a community program like the YMCA. Foot care is also important for people with diabetes. Make a gift basket that includes nail clippers, a pumice stone, an emery board, skin lotion, lightly padded socks, and slippers to help your sweetheart properly care for his or her feet. The best gift you can give your sweetheart is love, support, and knowledge of how to manage diabetes so you can live a long, healthy life together!

To learn more about diabetes, its link to heart disease, and how to help a loved one, order your free copies of *Tips for Helping a Person with Diabetes* by contacting the National Diabetes Education Program at www.YourDiabetesInfo.org or 1-888-693-NDEP (6337).

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Diabetes Education Program is jointly sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with the support of more than 200 partner organizations.

National Diabetes Education materials

www.yourdiabetesinfo.org

www.ndep.nih.gov

Tips for Helping a Person with Diabetes

http://www.ndep.nih.gov/media/TipsHelping_Eng.pdf

How You can Help your Loved One with Diabetes

http://ndep.nih.gov/diabetes/pubs/TipsHelping_Eng.pdf

4 Steps to Control Your Diabetes. For Life.

http://www.ndep.nih.gov/media/4_Steps.pdf

A Little Help Goes a Long Way: Supporting a Loved One with Diabetes

http://www.ndep.nih.gov//media/SocialSupport_Feature.pdf

A Little Help From My Family Print PSA

http://www.ndep.nih.gov//media/LittleHelp_AfricanAm.pdf

Reach Out to Loved Ones Living with Diabetes

http://www.ndep.nih.gov//media/SocialSupport_Article.pdf