

Sports & Diabetes Stigma:

Helping People With Diabetes Thrive

dStigmatize
Pocket Guide



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What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a chronic condition that impacts how the body uses blood sugar for energy. There are two common types:

- **Type 1 diabetes (T1D)** is where the body cannot make insulin, a hormone required to use blood sugar for energy.
- **Type 2 diabetes (T2D)** is where the body does not make enough insulin or respond to it effectively.

Help end diabetes stigma!

Diabetes is complicated, but neither form of diabetes is a result of personal choices.

Managing diabetes looks different for everyone, but may include a combination of medications, adjustments to eating and exercise patterns, and medical devices/technology:



Manual and continuous glucose monitoring systems (CGMs)



Insulin pumps or injections

It's not texting! some people may check their blood sugar and dose insulin from their phones!



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You Can Support People with Diabetes

Many people living with diabetes regularly monitor their blood sugar levels to avoid dangerous highs or lows during exercise.

Some exercises can raise blood sugar while others may lower it, so mid-workout checks and adjustments can be important. **People with diabetes will manage their diabetes independently**, but you can support by fostering inclusive spaces to manage their diabetes so they can stay safe, feel confident, and perform at their best.

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What do low and high sugars look like?

Low blood sugar: difficulty concentrating, dizziness, trembling, sweating, light-headedness, hunger, irritability, or loss of consciousness (in extreme cases). Emergency glucagon (above) can be used to treat severe, emergency lows.

High blood sugar:

difficulty concentrating, irritability, sweating, lethargy, blurred vision, thirst, or excessive urination.

High blood sugar:
180 mg/dL at rest

Target range:
90-250 mg/dL prior to initiating exercise
70-180 mg/dL at rest

Low blood sugar:
70 mg/dL & below



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Learn more about exercise & diabetes



Download more resources at dStigmatize.org



Learn more about exercise & diabetes management at diabeteswise.org



This resource was created for dStigmatize, a diaTribe Foundation program, with support from Novo Nordisk. In collaboration with Dessi Zaharieva PhD, CEP, CDCES (Stanford University) and Chris Bright BSc (Hons), MRes, Honorary Fellow at the University of Worcester (UK) (Breakthrough T1D), together with INSPIRE T1D.

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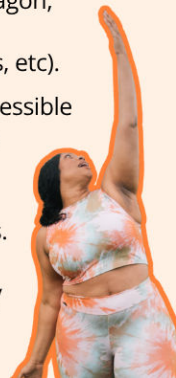


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Creating Spaces for Athletes to Thrive In

Help ensure athletes with diabetes get necessary accommodations to manage their diabetes during practices and matches.

- Keep emergency supplies on hand (glucagon, fast-acting carbohydrates, etc).
- Have safe, accessible spaces on the sidelines to store & use these supplies. Don't keep them far away or locked up.



- Don't try to tell a person with diabetes how to manage their condition or talk down to them.
- Know the signs of an emergency and when to call for medical help.

You Can Help End Diabetes Stigma

4 in 5 people with diabetes experience negative attitudes, judgment, assumptions, and prejudice simply for having diabetes, known as diabetes stigma. **Stigma is a major reason many people self-exclude from sports.**

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How We Talk About Diabetes Matters

Set a supportive tone by **choosing language that:**

- is neutral, nonjudgmental, and based on facts
- is strengths-based, respectful, inclusive, and imparts hope
- is person-centered
- fosters collaboration with people with diabetes

Consider the impact of **non-verbal communication**, too. For example, don't gasp or stare at diabetes devices or management behaviors and avoid crowding around someone experiencing a medical emergency.

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Let People With Diabetes Lead

Some people prefer to keep conversations about diabetes private, while others may find it helpful to educate their coach or team about diabetes. Let them set the tone and pace.

Try this: "I've been doing my best to educate myself about diabetes. If you ever need support, I'm here for you."

Instead of this: "Now is the only time to check your sugars. Your kit is in the locker room. I'll tell the team you're out."

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