



😊 Children with Diabetes*

Inside the Diabetes Healthcare Team

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Ideally, the healthcare team you see for your diabetes care would consist of many different providers.¹ This is not always the case, but if you can find a center with a multidisciplinary team, studies show that people with diabetes have better health outcomes and fewer complications when they see a team utilizing the chronic care model.¹ This model promotes person-centered care and a team-based approach. Here's a look at the various team members you may have on your diabetes team.

The Endocrinologist

You need a provider who can prescribe medications, order lab tests, make official diagnoses, and do all those “doctor-like” things. Endocrinologists are medical doctors who specialize in endocrine disorders, including diabetes. Because endocrinologists are not always available to people with diabetes, people often see primary care providers to help manage their diabetes instead.

If you are seeing a primary care team and feeling like you are not getting everything you need, you may want to see where the closest endocrinologist is located and if it's feasible for you to see them. Many offer telemedicine visits, but you will need to check with that office and your insurance to see if you have that service and provider covered.

Many endocrinology clinics have diabetes education specialists or other health care providers who make the care more interdisciplinary, which can be helpful during challenging times of diabetes self-management. These specialists are also often more knowledgeable about newer standards of care, diabetes technologies, and local and national resources.

Primary Care Doctor

Sometimes, people with diabetes have great experiences with their primary care team for their diabetes care. Many primary care doctors are interested in managing diabetes and have much diabetes-specific knowledge. Word of mouth from other people with diabetes can be helpful in finding these more knowledgeable providers near where you live.

Some primary care teams are involved in projects to learn more about diabetes, including those involved with Project ECHO Diabetes. Project ECHO Diabetes locations are throughout [Washington](#), [California](#), [Florida](#), and other states in the U.S., as well as some international locations, including Ecuador.

Physician Assistant/Nurse Practitioner

Many practices also employ nurse practitioners or physician assistants who function essentially like doctors. In most states, they evaluate and treat patients, including prescribing medications, making referrals, interpreting laboratory results, etc. Each state has various laws, and some have certain restrictions, such as requiring supervision when prescribing narcotics. In some practices, they are the primary providers for patients with diabetes and spend time making calls to patients or working on research.

The Clinical Diabetes Care and Education Specialist/Dietitian/Diabetes Nurse

Each title is slightly different, but their roles are often similar in the diabetes clinic. Many dietitians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals become certified as Diabetes Care and Education Specialists (CDCES, previously known as CDEs). To earn the CDCES

credential, [a qualified healthcare professional](#) must combine experience, continuing education, and passing an exam.

Diabetes Educators can be extremely helpful for diabetes self-management, and the American Association for Diabetes Care and Education Specialists (ADCES) recommends getting diabetes education at these [four key times in your diabetes journey](#):

1. When you are diagnosed with diabetes
2. Yearly or when you are not meeting your goals
3. When you are experiencing a new challenge
4. When you have changes in your life stage or health insurance changes

ADCES also has a [resource to help you find a diabetes care and education specialist](#) near you. Seeking a dietitian or nutrition specialist would be ideal if you need nutrition education.

The Psychologist or Social Worker

Diabetes increases the risk of having mental health challenges, some more related to diabetes than others. It can be extremely helpful when you are having a difficult time coping with a new diagnosis, with a change in life stage, with a new medication or technology, or when you are experiencing distress or burnout. These are all very real and valid things that people with diabetes experience and finding someone who can help them navigate through these challenges is important.

Psychologists and Social Workers are trained mental health care professionals who are equipped with the tools and skills to help guide people through life's many problems. They are also often knowledgeable about resources in the community that are available to you, depending on your situation. To find a psychologist or mental health care professional near you, you can search the [American Diabetes Association's Mental Health Provider Directory](#).

The Pharmacist

You may not realize it, but often, pharmacists are very knowledgeable about diabetes management. They typically have a thorough understanding of medications, how they work in the body, the side effects, and if any of the medications you take interact with other medications or supplements. They also often know about blood glucose monitoring, continuous glucose monitoring, and how to utilize coupons or discounts for diabetes supplies or medications. Some diabetes teams work closely with pharmacists, whereas others may not. But either way, they are a great resource for you.

No matter what your diabetes care team situation is, you should feel comfortable and safe with your provider. If you aren't happy with your current team, see if you can find another provider in your area or [participate in telemedicine](#) with someone who is passionate about diabetes management.

Resources

1. [Improving Care and Promoting Health in Populations: Standards of Care in Diabetes—2024](#)