

# diabetes etiquette

for people who DON'T have type 1 diabetes

- 1 DON'T offer unsolicited advice about my eating or other aspects of diabetes.**  
You may mean well, but giving advice about someone's personal habits, especially when it is not requested isn't very nice. Besides, many of the popularly held beliefs about diabetes ("You should stop eating sugar") are out of date or don't apply to type 1 diabetes.
- 2 DON'T tell me horror stories about your grandmother or other people with diabetes you have heard about.**  
Diabetes is scary enough, and stories like these are not reassuring! Besides, we now know that with good management, odds are good you can live a long, healthy and happy life with type 1 diabetes.
- 3 DON'T look so horrified when I check my blood glucose levels or give myself an injection.**  
It's not a lot of fun for me either. Checking blood glucose and taking medications are things I must do to manage diabetes well. If I have to hide while I do so, it makes it much harder for me.
- 4 DON'T offer thoughtless reassurances.**  
When you first learn about my diabetes, you may want to assure me with things like, "Hey, it could be worse; you could have cancer!" This won't make me feel better. And the implicit message seems to be that diabetes is not a big deal. However, type 1 diabetes (like cancer) IS a big deal.
- 5 DON'T ask me "how my diabetes is coming along."**  
The management of type 1 diabetes involves more than taking shots and watching what you eat. It is a complex balance of three things: insulin dosage, exercise and food. Growth, illness, stress, changes in activity level, changes in where shots are given and other factors can effect this balance. On-going adjustment is needed and my numbers will fluctuate (sometimes in extremes) every day.
- 6 DO realize and appreciate that diabetes is hard work.**  
Type 1 diabetes management is a full-time job I didn't apply for, didn't want and can't quit. It involves thinking about what, when and how much I eat, while also factoring in exercise, medication, stress, blood glucose monitoring and so much more – each and every single day.
- 7 DON'T try to find a "reason" that I have this disease.**  
Type 1 is not caused by being overweight. It is not caused by eating too much sugar. It is not contagious. Children do not outgrow diabetes or their need for insulin. Nothing that my parents did or did not do could have prevented the onset. Insulin does not cure diabetes, it controls it.
- 8 DO offer your love and encouragement.**  
As I work hard to manage my diabetes successfully, sometimes just knowing that you care can be very helpful and motivating.