



# Helping Your Teen with Type 1 Diabetes Transition Successfully from Dependence to Independence

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**Transitioning from adolescence to young adulthood is indeed challenging, especially if your teen has type 1 diabetes (T1D). As long as everyone is knowledgeable about life's ups and downs during this time, the process can not only be manageable, it can be exciting! By following the tips below, parents and caregivers can have confidence in teens with T1D becoming independent, successful adults.**

**It is important to build the following characteristics early on to help both in diabetes care and life in general.**

- 1.** Build self-efficacy (confidence) in your teen related to diabetes care and stress management.
- 2.** Find ways to emphasize and build resilience in your teen so they can face the challenges of life and diabetes.
- 3.** Emphasize resourcefulness as a life skill so your teen can adapt and troubleshoot with ease.

## Important Topics to Discuss with Your Teen Before They Live on Their Own:

### Appointments and Supplies

Make sure that your teen has started taking independent ownership for scheduling appointments with their diabetes support team, ordering their medical and fast-acting glucose supplies, and knows how to safely use and store their prescriptions and over-the-counter medications.

### Diabetes Support Team

Ensure your teen knows the value of and how to effectively communicate with their diabetes support team, including what questions to ask both during and in between appointments.

## Safe Living Environment

Talk with your teen about creating a safe and comfortable living environment, having roommates and sharing public spaces. Advise them that it is best for their well-being to make their roommates aware of their T1D, its complications and how to help in case of an emergency. Creating a supportive environment with clear boundaries is crucial to their safety.

## Relationships

Your teen should be able to confidently explain T1D, in simplified terms to close friends, or anyone else they choose to inform about their T1D. There are a lot of intricacies to manage in relationships and diabetes, especially romantic ones, including establishing an open line of communication to discuss topics that can be tough, like how diabetes can affect intimacy. Teaching your teen how to positively communicate with others about their T1D will equip them with a life-long skill that is essential to resilience and conflict resolution.

## Risky Behavior

Approach the subjects of sex, alcohol and drugs openly from a safety perspective. Most of all, trust your teen and let them know you will be there whenever they need you.

## Low /High Blood Sugars and Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA)

Make sure your teen knows the symptoms of both low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) and how these symptoms may change for them over time. It's critical they always carry supplies to treat low blood sugar levels. They also need to be aware of what to do in case of high blood sugar and when to check for ketones to avoid the very real threat of DKA and when to take emergency action.

For more information about life with diabetes and diabetes research advances, visit [www.jdrf.org](http://www.jdrf.org)

## Travel

Talk with your teen about how to prepare for travel, including developing a trip checklist and a plan for medical emergencies. Ensure they know the importance of carrying their diabetes supplies with them on flights versus checking them in their baggage where they may get lost, delayed or subject to extreme temperatures. Encourage them to stay calm and confident – especially in stressful situations.

## Employment

Make sure your teen knows their rights when it comes to employment. Review the American Disabilities Act, which covers everything they are entitled to in the workplace. Your teen should know the basics of job hunting, resume writing, and interviewing as well. The JDRF College Internship Program provides a great opportunity for college age young adults to explore professional opportunities in the diabetes field. Learn more about the program at [jdrf.org](http://jdrf.org).

## Emergency Preparedness

Make sure your teen has an emergency preparedness plan that they and people close to them can quickly and easily follow, including who to call if they need help, contact information for their local endocrinologist, and where the nearest hospital is located.

Remember, your teen is transitioning into adulthood and that these changes will also impact your relationship. As your teen takes on more responsibilities for their own care, talk to them about what role they would like you to play in their T1D life. It is important to be flexible with their changing needs. Now, more than ever, communication is key to providing the right amount of support in the right ways for your teen. Lead with love!

Every gift takes us one step closer to a cure for T1D. Find out how you can support JDRF and make a difference in the lives of people with T1D by visiting [jdrf.org/donate](http://jdrf.org/donate).

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