



ndss

National Diabetes Services Scheme

An Australian Government Initiative

You and your healthcare team

A guide for older people living
with diabetes

NDSS Helpline 1800 637 700
ndss.com.au

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 **diabetes**
australia

The NDSS is administered by Diabetes Australia

National Diabetes Services Scheme

The National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS) is an initiative of the Australian Government and is administered by Diabetes Australia. The NDSS provides information, support and services and diabetes-related products at subsidised prices to people living with diabetes.

Registration is free and open to all eligible people in Australia diagnosed with diabetes.

For more information, visit ndss.com.au or call the NDSS Helpline on 1800 637 700.

Diabetes Australia believes that the information contained in this training resource was accurate and reliable at the time of publication. The websites quoted in the resource were accessible at the time of publication. Diabetes Australia takes no responsibility for the accuracy or future availability of these sites.

Diabetes Australia takes no responsibility for any adverse consequences that arise as a result of using the content of the resources for clinical purposes. Trainees and other health professionals need to consider the individual circumstances and needs of people with diabetes when they are applying the skills outlined in this resource in their clinical practice information.

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About this booklet

This booklet provides information to help you work with your healthcare team and live well with diabetes. It has been designed to help you understand the health system and make it easier for you to manage your diabetes.

Know your support services

In addition to your healthcare team, there are many organisations that can help you manage your diabetes and general health. The following page lists a few of these organisations and the support services they offer.

Who	What they do	Contacts
National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS)	Supports people living with diabetes through access to subsidised products, information, programs and services.	1800 637 700 ndss.com.au
State and territory diabetes organisations	Provide a wide range of support services, including the latest diabetes information.	1800 177 055 diabetesaustralia.com.au
My Aged Care	Established by the Australian Government to help you find your way around the aged care system.	1800 200 422 myagedcare.gov.au

You can access NDSS products from pharmacies, often referred to as NDSS Access Points, from any location in Australia, even if you are away from home.

Key contacts

If you feel hesitant to bother other people when you are unwell, remember it is often better to get help early, rather than waiting. Make sure you let those on your contact list know when you are feeling unwell. If you are not sure whether you need an ambulance, it is better to be safe and check. Ring **000** and talk to the operator, and they will help decide whether you need an ambulance or some other service. Your safety is the most important thing.

If you have a mobile phone or a digital home phone, it is a good idea to program essential numbers into that phone. You can also fill in the missing numbers in the following table and keep it handy so you can find it quickly if you—or if a relative or friend—needs to call for help.

Contact	When	Phone number
Ambulance	If you are seriously ill, or if you are not sure whether you need to go to the hospital	000
Healthdirect Australia	If you are sick after hours and you are not sure what to do	1800 022 222
Your doctor	If you are sick during surgery hours and you want to see a doctor or are not sure what to do	
Your credentialled diabetes educator, community nurse or care coordinator	For information or advice	
Your emergency contact (family or friend)	To let them know you are unwell, especially if you feel worse	

If you do not already have a personal alarm, you may want to consider getting one. Personal alarms are devices that can be used to alert a family member, a friend or a monitoring service in a medical emergency. If you live alone, a personal alarm may help you to feel safe and stay independent in your own home. It will also reassure your family and friends that if you are in trouble you can easily call for help. Talk to someone in your healthcare team if you think this might help you.



Your healthcare team

Anyone can be part of your healthcare team. Your team can be made up of health professionals as well as your family. But **YOU** are the most important member, because you make the day-to-day decisions about your diabetes. Surrounding yourself with a healthcare team that understands your needs will help you feel supported to live well with diabetes.

Below is a list of health professionals you can have in your healthcare team. You do not need to include all the people mentioned here. Talk to your doctor or credentialed diabetes educator about who to include, and remember that you and your family are the most important members of your team.

Healthcare team member	What they do/how they can help	Add the contact details for your team members
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner	A health professional who can help support you with your diabetes and can connect you with other health professionals.	
Audiologist	A health professional who can assess and help with your hearing loss.	
Credentialed diabetes educator (CDE)	A health professional who is a specialist in diabetes. They can help you understand and manage your diabetes.	
Dentist	A health professional who can help keep your mouth, teeth and gums healthy through preventive care and treatment.	
Dietitian or accredited practising dietitian (APD)	A health professional who can work with you to discuss and plan healthy eating.	
Endocrinologist	A specialist diabetes doctor who gives expert advice on how to manage your diabetes. Your GP will refer you to an endocrinologist if needed.	
Exercise physiologist or physiotherapist	A health professional who gives advice and support about being physically active. They can create an exercise plan just for you.	
General practitioner (GP)	The doctor who plays a key role in your general health as well as monitoring your diabetes and helping you manage it.	

Healthcare team member	What they do/how they can help	Add the contact details for your team members
Geriatrician	A doctor who specialises in the care of older people and can help with more serious health issues such as memory loss. Your GP will refer you to a geriatrician if needed.	
Nurse practitioner	A nurse who has done additional training and can prescribe some medicines and order blood tests. You will sometimes see one who is specialised in diabetes or aged care.	
Ophthalmologist	A specialist doctor in eye health who can diagnose problems; prescribe medicines or undertake any necessary treatment.	
Optometrist	A health professional who can monitor your eyes for any changes and arrange treatment with an ophthalmologist if needed. They also look after your prescription glasses and contact lenses.	
Pharmacist	A health professional who gives advice about how and when to take your medicines, how they work, and possible side effects.	
Podiatrist	A health professional who can help keep your feet healthy by assessing, monitoring and treating any issues.	
Practice nurse	A nurse who works with your GP and can help you manage your diabetes.	
Psychologist or clinical psychologist	A health professional who can give you coping strategies to help with stress, anxiety or other emotional concerns.	
Social worker	A professional who can provide emotional and practical support, counselling and information.	



Get help from the health system

The Australian Government has a range of programs and plans that can help older people living with diabetes. If you are eligible, your doctor can help organise access for you.

Below are some plans and services you could talk to your doctor about.

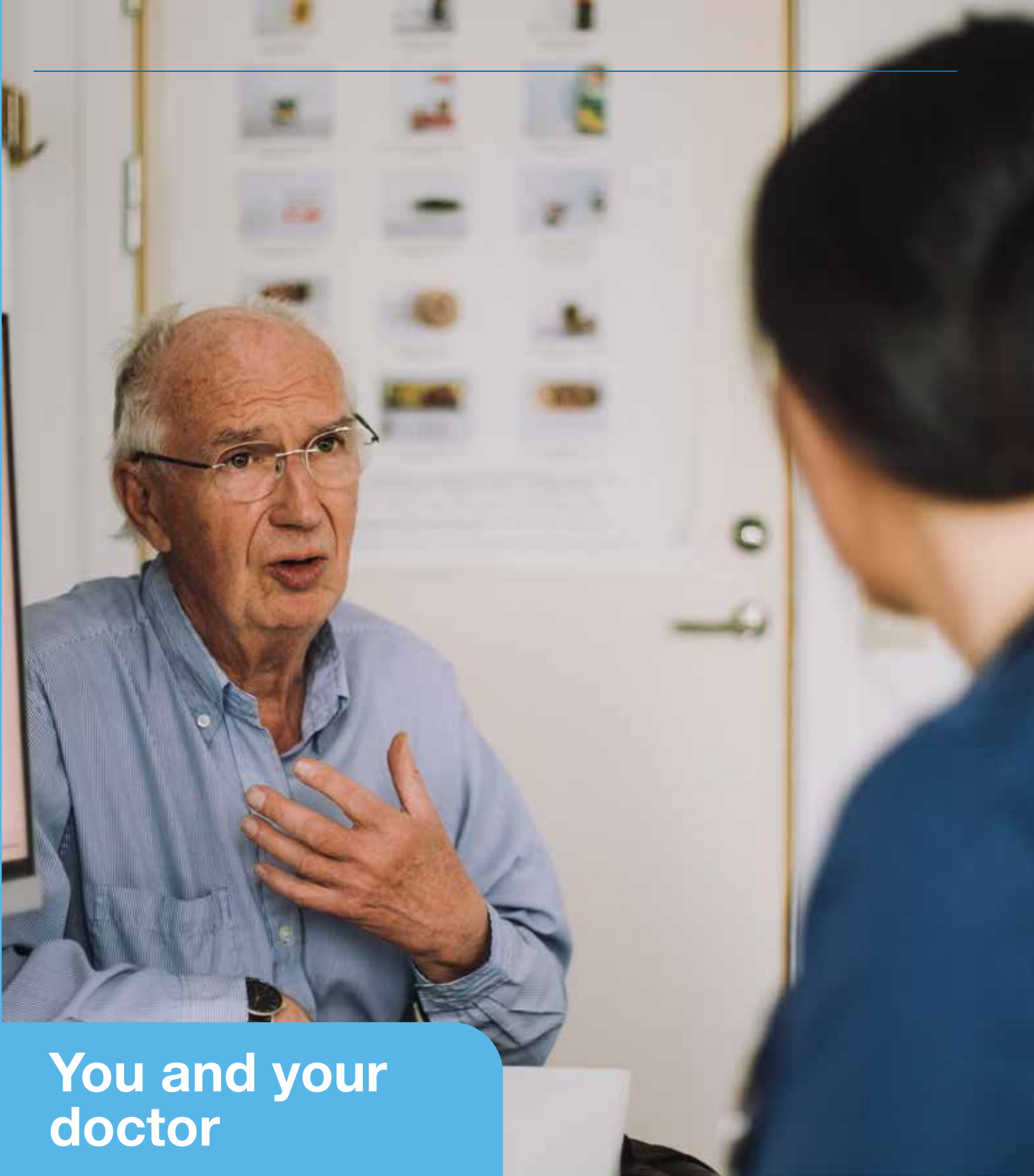
Plans and services	How it may help you
GP Management Plan	A GP Management Plan is a plan written by your GP that describes your healthcare needs, sets out the services your GP will provide, and explains steps you can take to manage your condition yourself. It is a free service.
Team Care Arrangement	If you and your GP agree that you would benefit from other healthcare providers being involved in your care, your GP may suggest preparing a Team Care Arrangement (TCA). With your consent, this arrangement will give you access to at least two other healthcare providers for up to five sessions per calendar year. If these other providers bulk bill (only charge the Medicare rebate), there will be no charge for this service, so check this when you make your first appointment. If you have private health insurance, you may decide to use that to help pay for these services instead of having a TCA.
Home Medicines Review	If you are concerned about the number of medicines you are taking and how they interact, you can ask your doctor to arrange a Home Medicines Review. This Medicare-funded service has a pharmacist visit your home to review your medicines, and provide your GP with a report. From there, your GP works with you on any adjustments required. It is a free service.
Diabetes MedsCheck	A Diabetes MedsCheck is a free pharmacy service that gives you one-on-one time with your pharmacist to discuss all your medicines. Your pharmacist can help you get the most benefit from your medicines.
Aged Care Assessment Team/ Service	An Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) assessment can be organised by your GP if you need some extra help at home or if you are thinking about moving into an aged care facility. In most states it is called an ACAT, while in Victoria it is called an Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS). Some people feel worried about having an assessment, but it just lets you know what type of care and how much you are eligible for. To get more information about ACAT or ACAS and getting help at home, visit myagedcare.gov.au or call 1800 200 422 .



Stay on track

As you get older it is important to stay on track with regular health checks. These checks help find health problems early, and make treatment easier.

How often	Who you should see
At least every 3 months	
Visit your doctor to review your diabetes and blood glucose levels	GP
At least every 6 months	
Get your blood pressure checked	GP, or endocrinologist (if your doctor has referred you to one), credentialled diabetes educator, registered nurse, nurse practitioner or practice nurse
Get your teeth checked, even if you wear dentures	Dentist, dental hygienist
At least every 12 months	
Have your memory assessed	GP
Have your hearing assessed	GP, audiologist
Have your cholesterol levels checked	GP, endocrinologist or nurse practitioner
Have your HbA1c* level checked (This is a blood test that shows an average of your blood glucose level over the past 10–12 weeks.)	GP or endocrinologist
Have your kidney health checked	GP or endocrinologist
Have your diet reviewed	Dietitian
Have your feet checked and treated	Podiatrist, GP, endocrinologist or practice nurse
Have your medicines reviewed	Pharmacist, GP or endocrinologist or practice nurse
Have your diabetes management reviewed	Credentialled diabetes educator, GP or endocrinologist
At least every 2 years	
Have a comprehensive eye examination	Optometrist or ophthalmologist



You and your doctor

The following issues may not affect you, but it is important to tell your doctor if you:

- » have blood glucose levels that are regularly higher or lower than your target range
- » lose your appetite or appear to be losing weight without trying
- » have problems with tummy upsets or indigestion, or problems swallowing
- » have incontinence, constipation or other problems with your bowels or passing urine
- » have had a fall
- » have a sore mouth or problems with your teeth or dentures
- » often feel confused or forget things
- » feel sad or worried for more than two weeks
- » have problems with sexual health or wellbeing
- » have new pain that is concerning you, or are feeling sore or uncomfortable
- » have trouble taking your medicines
- » have an infection in any part of your body
- » have trouble checking your blood glucose level
- » have trouble doing household jobs such as cleaning, cooking or shopping
- » are taking any over-the-counter medicines or other drugs, or any herbal medications, vitamins or supplements.

You should also let a friend or family member know if you are sick or having problems with your diabetes or everyday activities.

Make the most of your doctor's appointment

It is not unusual to feel embarrassed or overwhelmed if you do not understand something your doctor said. Try not to let this worry you, and ask your doctor to explain it again. It is also fine to ask your doctor to spell medical words, draw a picture or write information down for you—they want you to understand as much as possible.

The following tips may help you to get the most out of your visit to your doctor:

- 1. Make a list of questions.** Before your visit, write down a list of things you want to ask your doctor, putting the most important things at the top of the list. If you do not think you can ask all your questions in a short appointment, book a long appointment.
- 2. Bring a list of all your medicines and daily dose.** This should include any drugs or other medicines you are taking, including over-the-counter medicines and herbal or vitamin supplements. Ask about side effects, the best time to take your medicines, and what to do about your medicines if you feel unwell.
- 3. Take your blood glucose meter and diabetes record book (if you check your blood glucose levels).** This is important information for your doctor and other health professionals to know so that they can help you manage your diabetes.
- 4. Take a pen and paper.** You may need to write down the answers to your questions and other things you need to remember.
- 5. Ask a friend or family member to go with you.** This will help you keep track of important information.

Notes

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