

Don't feel guilty.  
It's not your fault that  
you have diabetes!

# Resources

Ordre des psychologues du Québec  
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Life's brighter under the sun

This educational tool was produced with the support  
of Sun Life, which is committed to preventing diabetes.

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# Learning to live with type 2 diabetes

## The path to acceptance

Whether your diabetes diagnosis is recent or not, one fact remains: you will need to learn to live with this disease since it cannot be cured.

Having diabetes forces you to mourn the loss of the image you had of yourself and your health. It also involves changing certain behaviours forever. All this can generate a lot of emotion, and **that's perfectly normal**.

Here's a five-step plan to help you move towards acceptance of your type 2 diabetes. By coming to terms with this new reality in your life, you will regain some control over your health, which will motivate you to get actively involved in your treatment and enjoy life to the fullest.

One day at a time.  
One goal at a time!



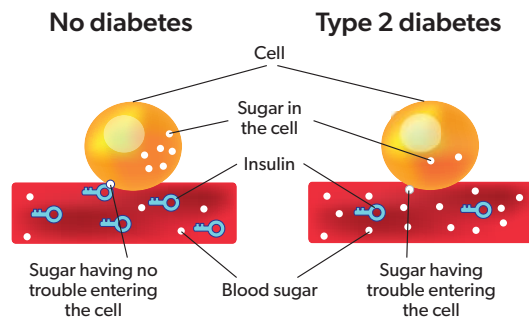
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## Step 1: Understanding type 2 diabetes

Diabetes is a chronic disease characterized by higher than normal levels of sugar in the bloodstream.

Normally, blood sugar is kept within normal values primarily by insulin. Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas. It acts like a key that lets the sugar in the bloodstream enter the body's cells for use as a source of energy.



In type 2 diabetes, two phenomena are usually present:

1. The body's resistance to the action of insulin;
2. A drop in insulin production.

This causes sugar levels to build up in the blood, which causes blood sugar to rise above normal values.

Several factors are involved in the development of type 2 diabetes, some of which you can act on and others not.

## Step 2: Understanding why your diabetes must be managed

Diabetes is a disease with serious consequences. However, by learning how to live with the disease and taking steps to properly manage it, you can prevent or delay the onset of serious and irreversible complications, primarily to the:

- Eyes;
- Kidneys;
- Nerves;
- Blood vessels;
- Heart.

## Step 3: Changing your attitude

Maintaining a positive attitude towards yourself and your health will move you along the path to acceptance of your diabetes.

### This can involve:

- The way you describe yourself.

“ I live with diabetes. ” instead of “ I am diabetic. ”

You are undoubtedly someone with many abilities and interests. Diabetes is just one part of your reality, not what defines you.

- Replacing negative thoughts with more positive ones:

“ I will never be able to make the necessary changes to my lifestyle. ”

with

“ It may not be easy to change some of my habits, but with perseverance and the right structure, I can do it! ”

## Step 4: Determining where you are on the path to acceptance

When you were diagnosed, you may have felt anger, fear or despair. All these reactions are normal. They are the stages of the adaptation process leading to acceptance of the disease. They vary from person to person and can be experienced more than once, at a different rate and in a different order.

### Shock and denial:

A defence mechanism that protects you from a new, scary reality.

“It's not possible. The doctor must have made a mistake.”

### Anger and revolt:

A useful reaction that lets you express how unfair you feel the new diagnosis is so that you can move on to another stage.

“Why me? It's so unfair!”

### Bargaining (yes, but...):

The first step towards acceptance, but the person attempts to reduce the treatment requirements.

“I am happy to take my medication, but there's no way I'm changing my diet!”

### Depression (with hope):

The realization that some things will never be the same, and sometimes doubt about your ability to manage the disease.

“I'll never be able to control my blood sugar.”

### Acceptance and adaptation:

Achieving a balance that allows you to manage daily life by integrating diabetes treatment.

“I can live the life I want even if I have diabetes.”

## Step 5: Taking action

As you move along the path to accepting your diabetes, you may want to make some changes to help you manage it better. However, it is impossible to change everything all at once. Set one goal at a time. To help you succeed, this goal should be realistic, specific, measurable and time-bound. Start with what makes sense for you and what you think is easiest to achieve.

For example: “Starting tomorrow, I will walk for 15 minutes every Monday and Thursday.”

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Why do I want to achieve this goal?
2. What actions should I take to achieve this goal?
3. What obstacles might stop me from achieving my goal and how can I overcome them?

Don't hesitate to reach out for support from your family and team of health professionals.

Remember: relapses are part of the change process. No need to feel guilty. You can learn from the experience!

Congratulate yourself on your progress!



You have great power over the progression of your diabetes!