

# Module 8: Transitioning Medical Care

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## What is Transitioning?

Transition means changing or moving from one stage or place to another. Everyone goes through transitions in life - like when you graduated from elementary school or started a new job. Transition can be exciting and involve new experiences, but transition can also be difficult and scary, especially when you are not prepared for it.

An important transition in your life will be moving from child to adult healthcare for your diabetes. As you get older, you have to become responsible for your health and you need to be able to take the steps to make sure that you stay as healthy as possible.

The main change is that you will be changing your doctor from one that focuses on youth to one that focuses on adults. Transition also involves other important aspects like:

- Understanding diabetes
- Answering and asking questions at your medical appointments
- Making your own medical decisions
- Taking your medicines on your own
- Speaking up for yourself

Here's a great video that explains transitioning from Nemours:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjXurYrFMZM>

With the help of this site, your healthcare team, and your family, you can have a successful transition!



## When Does Transition Happen?

Transition does not happen all of a sudden, rather it is a step-by-step process that you, your family, and your doctors work on over time.

Transition can be made simple by starting early and taking the time to get used to the new responsibilities that you will be having. It is never too early to start thinking about transition because being prepared can make it easier in the long-run. It is a good idea to start creating a transition plan with your healthcare team before age 14. The earlier you start, the better, because then you will be able to work on your plan for a few years before you move to a different doctor or hospital.

It is important to know that some pediatric hospitals have different practices and rules regarding care of older patients. For example, at some places patients over the age of 21 cannot be admitted to the pediatric hospital. At other places the age limit is 18 or 22 years. Ask your doctor about the policies at your hospital.

## Why Do You Need to Transition?

Transitioning is important because it prepares you to become a successful, independent adult. Some of the responsibilities that come with transitioning can be scary, but just remember that with these responsibilities you are also gaining more freedom and privileges. Through transition, you earn the freedom to be in control of your own life.

Transition can be difficult because you might be leaving a pediatric doctor or healthcare team that knows you well and that you feel comfortable with. These individuals, however, are often not trained to treat adults. Treating adults and children with diabetes can be very different so it is important that you are ready for the changes to come.



## All About Insurance

An important thing you have to know about when you are going to be part of adult care is health insurance.

### What Is Health Insurance?

Another important thing you have to know about when you are going to be part of adult care is health insurance. Health insurance is a plan that people buy so they can pay a fixed amount of money for a range of medical care including doctors' appointments, emergency room visits, hospital stays, and medications.

Health insurance is now required for everyone in the United States. People who don't have insurance have to pay penalties that get more expensive each year.

The Kaiser Family Foundation offers a great video to explain the basics:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-58VD3z7ZiQ>

### What Kind of Health Insurance Do You Have?

Because you are part of the CHECK Program, this means that you are receiving health insurance through the state of Illinois. You get a type of government-funded health insurance that is available only to certain people, like low-income adults and people with disabilities. A very common state program is called Medicaid.



## Are You Ready for Transition?

The very first thing you need to do is figure out when you will be changing insurance. Will it be at 18 years or 21 years or maybe 26? The best thing to do will be to ask your parent or guardian what exactly your insurance is and what will change when. Once you know, this is considered your time of transition.

Change can be a scary thing, but there are ways to be prepared for it. We have some checklists that can help you figure out whether you are ready to transition or not. They can be divided based on how far away your time of transition will be. For example, if you will be changing health insurance at 18 years old, you will need to start thinking about this when you are around 16 to 17 years old. Here are the time periods:

- 1 to 2 Years Before Transition
- 6 to 12 Months Before Transition
- 1 to 6 Months Before Transition

If you can answer " YES " to most topics with these checklists, great! You are ready to transition soon. If you answer " NO," to a statement, make sure to talk about it with your parent and/or guardian and follow up with your doctor for help related to that topic.



## 1 to 2 Years Before Your Transition

There are a lot of things your parents or guardian does for you. These things you will need to learn how to do once you have become an adult.

1. Do you know how to make appointments with your doctor?
2. Do you know how to refill prescriptions?
3. Do you know how to contact your doctor if you have any questions or problems?
4. Do you know your insurance?
5. Do you have your own insurance card that you carry around?
6. Do you keep track of your blood sugar between appointments so you can review it with your doctor?
7. Do you know how smoking, drugs, and alcohol affect diabetes?



## 6 to 12 Months Before Your Transition

Health insurance is really important to understand because it can change depending on your situation. This is a good topic to make sure you know about 6 to 12 months before you need to transition.

1. Do you know which healthcare plan you have?
2. Do you know which plan you will transition to?
3. Do you know where to get help for health insurance?

You should also start making sure you know your medical history and how to get this information to your new doctor. It would be a good idea to start understanding your health status and collecting your information so you can share it with your future adult care team.

1. Do you know which type of diabetes (Type 1 or Type 2) you have?
2. Do you know what type of medicines you take?
3. Do you have any other health issues like kidney problems, issues with blood pressure or trouble seeing?





## 1 to 6 Months Before Your Transition

When the transition date becomes closer, it's a good idea to figure out who your adult doctor will be ahead of time. You can talk to your current doctor for some recommendations. You may find a doctor in the same clinic you currently go to or you may have to go to a different location. Your parent should be able to help you with this too.

Another thing to know is that as an adult, your parents will actually need permission to be able to get your health information. You will need to sign a form that allows them to see your medical record.



## Medical Knowledge Checklist

As you are transitioning into adult care, you will find that your doctors will expect you to know more about your diabetes than you are used to. They won't expect you to know everything, but they will expect that you have a basic understanding about living with diabetes.

Because you are transitioning, it is likely that your parents or guardians have been keeping track of your health, but you have reached the age where it is your turn to take care of yourself. Ask your doctors and parents to go through your medical records with you so that you can have a better understanding of diabetes. Go through the questions below and see what you understand on your own and make sure you ask for help for the items you do not fully understand.

1. Do you know when you need to take your medicine?
2. Do you know how to monitor your blood glucose levels?
3. Do you know about keeping yourself healthy by having good A1c, blood pressure and cholesterol levels?
4. Do you know what to do when you have a crisis like hyperglycemia (high blood sugar) or hypoglycemia (low blood sugar)?
5. Do you understand the importance of wearing diabetes identification?
6. Do you know how to care for your feet?
7. Can you make sure to have regular appointments with your dentist?
8. Can you make sure to have regular visits to get your eyes checked?
9. Do you know about immunizations (i.e. flu vaccine) and when to get them?
10. Do you know where to find help if you need more information about your diabetes?



## Medical Skills Checklist

Having diabetes means that you need to understand your body better than others and be prepared to handle complications that can happen because of your diabetes. It is important that you are able to do ALL of the following to make sure that your health is at its best at all times. Go through the following items and see what you are able to do on your own and get help for the items that need work.

1. I can tell someone what diabetes is and how it makes me feel.
2. I know how to use a thermometer and what to do if I have fever.
3. I answer my doctor's questions during my clinic visits.
4. I ask questions during my medical appointments.
5. I know how to schedule a medical appointment.
6. I keep track of my medical appointments using a calendar.
7. I can get myself to my medical appointments.
8. I know how to get my prescriptions filled.
9. I have or am working on a medical transition plan when I leave pediatrics



## Education and Employment Skills Checklist

It is important to know the options available to you to make sure that you get the most out of your education and employment. Look through this checklist and make sure that you are prepared in all aspects of life to better handle having diabetes.

- If you need a 504 Plan or Individualized Education Plan (IEP), do you know what it is and how to participate?
- Do you plan to graduate from high school / vocational school or obtain a GED?
- Have you been thinking about the kind of career I would like as an adult?
- Have you talked to your school counselor or a teacher about your educational / career goals?
- Do you know what type of training I might need for the career you want?
- Do you know the types of work situations that could cause problems related to diabetes?
- Have you practiced your job interview skills?
- Do you know how to write a resume?
- Do you know where to find information about job training and opportunities?
- Do you know where to find information about educational scholarships?
- Have you talked with your parents about your vision for your future?



## Health Benefits Checklist

Make sure that you are able to check yes to these points to make sure that you are prepared to manage your health and receive the best care for your diabetes.

1. I know what kind of medical insurance I have.
2. I understand the different types of health benefits that are available to me.
3. I know how my age can affect my health benefits.
4. I carry my own copy of my health insurance card.
5. I have a plan for the future regarding my health benefits.

Be sure to ask your doctor or community healthcare worker for help if you don't know the answers to these questions



## Social Support Checklist

Make sure that you can check yes to these questions to ensure that you have the best social support to help manage your diabetes.

1. I have a good support system of family and/or friends.
2. I understand what self-esteem is.
3. I understand the difference between being sad and being depressed.
4. I understand what "healthy relationships" are.
5. I have hobbies or activities that I enjoy.
6. I have a person that I can talk to about diabetes.
7. I have a positive vision of my future.



## Important Health Insurance Tips

Pay close attention to any mail or phone calls from your medical insurer.

1. Sometimes you only get one warning to send in paperwork or else your insurance coverage will end.
2. Sometimes a bill is wrong and you only have a short time to fix the mistake.
3. Bills that are not paid might quickly be sent to a collection agency.

Make sure that your medical insurer has the correct mailing address and contact information for you. If you miss one key notice because your mail went to an old address, you might end up with a very large mess.



## Where Can I Get Help?

Trying to figure out how to transition to the right health insurance can seem very complicated. The good news is that there are people who you can talk to in your community to figure out what to do.

Illinois Department of Human Services has resource centers all across Illinois to help people figure out which health insurance they should have and how to apply for it.

There are different locations depending on where you live.

Click on [this link](#) to find the one that is closest to you. Here are a few examples:

### DHS Family Community Resource Center in Cook County - Calumet Park

Family Community Resource Center

831 West 119th Street

Chicago, IL 60643

Phone: (773) 660-4700

TTY: (866) 439-3713

### DHS Family Community Resource Center in Cook County - Englewood

Family Community Resource Center

5323 South Western Avenue

Chicago, IL 60609

Phone: (773) 918-6700

TTY: (866) 214-9360

### DHS Family Community Resource Center in Cook County - Humboldt Park

Family Community Resource Center

2753 West North Avenue

Chicago, IL 60647

Phone: (773) 292-7200

TTY: (866) 439-3721

There is also a general helpline you can call to ask questions: For more information about medical benefits, call the Health Benefits Hotline: In Illinois: 1-866-468-7543



## What Other Kinds of Health Insurance are there?

In the future, you may be in a situation where you will be getting a different type of health insurance. Here are some examples of different kinds:

- The Health Insurance Marketplace. This option allows people who need to buy health insurance on their own to choose the best insurance to meet their needs. It's also sometimes called a Health Insurance Exchange. Get Covered Illinois is the official source to shop for health insurance online:  
<https://getcoveredillinois.gov/explore-coverage-options/>
- Student health coverage through a college. These provide only a little basic health coverage while you are enrolled in a college, but generally are not going to cover enough services for people with chronic medical condition like diabetes. Students with diabetes who choose these coverages have to be careful and make sure that they know what is covered. In some cases, this type of plan may not cover some basic blood tests and clinic visits– so you could be stuck with large medical bills to pay out of pocket
- Employer plans. This is the way a lot of people in the United States get their health insurance. It is also usually the least expensive option, since employers often help pay for part of the insurance. Some employers offer health insurance coverage on your first day of work. Others may make you work a period of time first (30, 60, or 90 days).
- Parents' plan. In the United States, kids can stay on their parents' health insurance plan until age 26. This is true even if you're married, live somewhere else, and have a job.

## Where to Find More Information

If you want to read more about any of the topics in this module, here are the websites where the information is from:

National Diabetes Education Program gives information for both parents and youth about diabetes in general as well as key tips to know for the transition:

<http://ndep.nih.gov/transitions/>



[Click here](#) to visit Kidshealth, which offers a lot of easy to understand information

Got Transition is a great resource that offers a lot of information all about transitioning along with comments from youth like you. Visit

<http://www.gottransition.org/youthfamilies/index.cfm> to learn more!



Congratulations! You have just completed the CHECK Diabetes Online Program! Hopefully it has helped you manage your diabetes better so you can stay healthier and enjoy life! Even though you are finished, you can always go back to any module to review any information!



Congratulations!