



A Little Help Goes a Long Way: Supporting a Loved One with Diabetes

Alfred Dimps eats right, stays active, and follows a lifestyle plan to control diabetes. Except that Alfred doesn't have diabetes – his wife Linda does.

After Linda was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes in 1997, she didn't change her eating or exercise habits. She took her prescribed medication, but soon developed a kidney complication. Kidney problems are often the result of uncontrolled diabetes.

Then, four years ago, Linda's mother passed away from diabetes complications. She was on dialysis, suffered a heart attack, and lost her vision. Linda saw the devastating effects that diabetes had on her mother's health and vowed to avoid the same fate. So in 2002 Linda and Alfred made some changes. They began to take her diabetes more seriously and to manage it more effectively.

The National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) encourages friends and family to be active participants in supporting the more than 18 million Americans with diabetes. The active support of loved ones helps people with diabetes live longer, healthier lives. Linda's doctor encourages their family-oriented approach to controlling her diabetes. With Alfred's invaluable support, Linda is controlling her diabetes for life.

Alfred, 58, and Linda, 52, worked together to develop a plan of action for making lifestyle changes that helped both of them feel better, stay healthy, and control Linda's diabetes. "We found a balance," says Alfred. "We concentrated on being consistent with our meals, our activities, medication, and doctor's appointments. And we stay positive every day."

Linda walks every day and takes water aerobics at a local community center near her home in Washington, DC. Alfred prepares most of their meals and takes simple steps to make the meals healthy and delicious. Alfred bakes food instead of frying, cuts back on salt, and uses different seasonings. "I do a lot of research," he says. "I read the literature that Linda gets from her doctor and diabetes education classes, and I keep up on what's going on with the disease. Together, we make this work!"

In addition, Linda manages her diabetes by controlling her ABCs: blood glucose as measured by the A1C test, Blood pressure, and Cholesterol. Since adopting their healthy habits, Linda has dropped 58 pounds – she even lost a shoe size! She has also greatly reduced her risk for kidney disease, heart attack, stroke, and other deadly complications. Alfred has struggled with high blood pressure in the past, and thanks to the lifestyle changes he and Linda made together he has lost 52 pounds and his blood pressure is now under control.

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For advice on how to help a loved one with diabetes, visit NDEP online at <http://www.ndep.nih.gov> to download or order a copy of their “Tips for Helping a Person with Diabetes.” Developed in partnership with the American Association of Diabetes Educators (AADE), the tip sheet also includes a list of resources for additional support and some great ideas from diabetes educators, nutritionists, and other health care professionals.

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