Mom! You're drinking a lot lately. Are you all right?

I think so. But, you're right. I seem to be thirsty all the time. And, I'm tired a lot too.

Maybe you should see the doctor?
Alicia went to the clinic for a checkup with her daughter Sarina soon after they talked. Tests showed that Alicia had diabetes.

Diabetes! My grandmother had diabetes, but I don’t know much about it.

Diabetes means you have a high blood sugar problem. The medical word for sugar in the blood is glucose.

We all get this type of sugar, from the foods we eat.

But why me, Doctor?

We don’t know what causes diabetes.

Insulin helps lower sugar levels by moving it from your blood into your body cells.

But too much sugar can make you sick.

Your body cells need sugar from food to give you the energy you need to be healthy.
When you have diabetes, your body does not make insulin, or it does not make enough insulin, or the insulin it makes doesn't work right.

You need the right amount of insulin to keep your blood sugar from being too high or too low. That's why people with diabetes often say they have a sugar problem.

What is insulin, doctor?

Insulin is a chemical your body makes to help sugar, or glucose, get into your body cells to give you energy.

Is this clear, Mrs. Rodriguez?

Yes, doctor. Thank you.

What do I have, doctor?

You have type 2 diabetes. This is the most common type.

Your body is not making enough insulin or your insulin is not working right.

There are two main types of diabetes, Mrs. Rodriguez — type 1 diabetes and type 2 diabetes.
These charts describe the two different types of diabetes.

**TYPE 1 DIABETES**
- Your body is not making any insulin
- Occurs more often in young people
- Your body cells are “starving” for sugar to give you energy

**TYPE 2 DIABETES**
- Your body does not make enough insulin or... it cannot properly use the insulin it does make
  - Occurs more often in adults
- Your body cells don’t have enough sugar to give you energy

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**COMMON SYMPTOMS OF TYPE 2 DIABETES**
(Note: Not all may occur.)
- Often thirsty
- Need to urinate often
- Tired all the time
- Weight loss
- Blurry vision
- Often hungry
- Dry or itchy skin

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Yes. High blood sugar levels can cause all of the problems you are having - and more.

Different people may have different symptoms, including:

So high blood sugar is what is making me feel so bad?
If your blood sugar stays too high, for too long, it can cause serious health problems.

What kind of problems, doctor?

People with diabetes are more likely to have problems with their heart, eyes, and feet...and more. It depends.

How serious is my diabetes, doctor? Will I be able to take care of my family?

The doctor explains that many people can control their diabetes by changing the way they eat and exercising regularly. Other people need to take medicine, such as diabetes pills, insulin, or both.
These are the main ways diabetes is controlled. Unfortunately, there is no cure for diabetes. But, you can usually avoid diabetes problems by controlling your blood sugar.

- A healthy eating meal plan
- An exercise plan
- Weight loss (if necessary)
- Diabetes pills or insulin (if necessary)
- Check blood sugar often

We will work together, Mrs. Rodríguez, to develop a plan that will help you control your diabetes. Unfortunately, there is no cure for diabetes. But, you can usually avoid diabetes problems by controlling your blood sugar. And, you will feel a lot better too!
The doctor wants Alicia to lose some weight. His nurse will help Alicia choose foods that she likes that will also help control her diabetes.

Everyone is different, Mrs. Rodriguez.

First, we will develop a plan that includes healthy eating, exercise and losing some weight.

You will also need to take diabetes pills to help you control your diabetes.

The goal of treating diabetes is always the same - to keep your blood sugar normal or as close to normal as possible all the time.

Losing some weight will help you do this.

Doctor, why do some people get diabetes and some people don’t?

In most cases, we don’t know. We do know that type 2 diabetes is more common in overweight people or people who are not physically active.

It is also more common in Hispanics and African-Americans.
Thank you, doctor, for explaining all this to me.

You're welcome.

My nurse, Ms. Leal, will show you how to begin to control your blood sugar by making some changes in the way you eat. She will also help you start a program of regular exercise.

Eating the right foods and regular exercise will both help you lose some weight... and lower your blood sugar.

You will learn how to keep your blood sugar levels in a safe range, Alicia. You don’t want them to be too high—or too low.

Blood sugar levels that are too high, or too low, can cause some serious problems.

We will help, but controlling your blood sugar levels day-by-day will be up to you.

What kind of serious problems?
**HIGH BLOOD SUGAR**
(Medical Word - Hyperglycemia)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Common Symptoms</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too much food; too little exercise; too little medicine; illness; stress.</td>
<td>Very thirsty; blurry vision; loss of appetite; nausea or vomiting.</td>
<td>Eat 3 packets of sugar or high-sugar foods.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LOW BLOOD SUGAR**
(Medical Word - Hypoglycemia)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Common Symptoms</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not enough food (skipped meal); too much exercise or too much medicine</td>
<td>Coldness; shakiness; dizziness; weakness; sudden hunger; headache; nervous or irritated</td>
<td>Eat 3 packets of sugar or high-sugar foods.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Good high-sugar foods to eat include four ounces (1/2 cup) of orange juice or three pieces of hard candy, such as peppermints, you can eat quickly.
Weight loss is only one way to help manage your diabetes. Healthy eating, exercise, and sometimes medicine, all work together to help you control your blood sugar.

Let’s talk about food first.

Okay. Eating is one of the best times of my day.

A healthy eating meal plan for people with diabetes is the same as for people without diabetes.

Your daily meal plan will include:

- Planning your meals before you shop
- Buying healthy foods
- Eating healthy food portions
- Maintaining a healthy weight.
**WHAT TO EAT**

- Vegetables (all kinds)
- Fruits (all kinds)
- Whole-grain breads, cereals, beans, tortillas, brown rice
- Lean chicken, fish, or meats (small portions)
- Fat-free or low-fat dairy products

**FOODS TO AVOID OR EAT LESS OF**

- Sugar and sugary foods
- High-fat and fatty foods
- Foods high in salt (over 20%)

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Your goal is to eat a balanced diet of carbohydrates, protein, and fat every day. About half of the calories you eat each day should be carbohydrates, such as whole grains.

It’s also important to eat more fruits and vegetables and low-fat or no-fat dairy products.

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Shouldn’t I be eating sugar if my body is “starving” for sugar to give me energy?

Most of the time, no. Eating a lot of sweet foods or foods with a lot of sugar can quickly give you a high blood sugar problem. Of course, that’s not true if you have a low blood sugar problem. Then you need some high sugar foods right away.
The doctor mentioned this, but I don’t remember what he said.

That’s normal, Alicia. It takes time to learn all the things you need to know to take good care of your diabetes.

If you have a low blood sugar you need to eat a fast-acting sugar snack right away so your blood sugar quickly returns to normal.

Now I remember. I won’t forget that.

Good. Here are some booklets that will help you with your goal to lose some weight.

Keep a record of what you eat in the meal planner I also just gave you and we will review it on your next visit.

Glucose tablets or packets of sugar or hard candies you can chew quickly.

Now, let’s talk about exercise. Exercise will help you control your blood sugar and help you lose weight.

Here is a good exercise plan to get you started.

**Exercise - Walking**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often...</th>
<th>4-6 times a week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How much...</td>
<td>10 to 15 minutes a day...to start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When: same time every day (if possible) - but anytime is OK too.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Well, Dr. Obregon says I need to lose weight. I guess it’s time I finally got serious about exercising.

Yes. I enjoy walking; especially with my friend Margaret.

Exercise can be fun. Do you like to walk? Your exercise plan should be something you like to do.

Yes. I enjoy walking; especially with my friend Margaret.

My blood sugar level looks good. I don’t need a snack before I exercise.

How’s it going?

It’s a lot to learn, Dr., but I think I am doing ok.

We’re here to make sure you learn everything you need to know to safely start taking better care of yourself, and your diabetes, Alicia. And you’re doing great.
Now let's talk about taking medicine for your diabetes. Some people with type 2 diabetes need to take diabetes pills to control their blood sugar.

Some people take insulin. And, some people take both insulin and diabetes pills.

And it's true that some people with type 2 diabetes can control it with a healthy diet, an exercise program and watching their weight, but most people take medicine.

The key to controlling your diabetes is to control your blood sugar levels. You can do this by following the five keys to good blood sugar control.

1. Eat healthy foods
2. Follow your exercise plan
3. Check your blood sugar often
4. Avoid or limit stress
5. If you take medicine, always take it as directed
Stress. Is that a new problem for me to worry about?

No, Alicia, we all have stress in our lives. Stress or strong emotions don't cause diabetes, but too much stress can cause high blood sugar problems.

Some Causes of Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear or worry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working too much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too little sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being sick</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The last thing we are going to discuss today is how to test your blood sugar.

Sarina, I would like you to watch this also.

There may be times when you, or another member of your family, will need to help your mom with this.

Avoiding stress and illness, when you can, by doing things like getting a good nights sleep, will help control your blood sugar.

Mom doesn't sleep a lot.

True. I know I should sleep more than I do - and I will from now on.

Most people, including you now Alicia, test their blood sugar by using a meter that shows you your blood sugar level.

First you stick your finger with a small needle to get a drop of blood.

Here is how you do it.
I know this seems like a lot to learn, but you will learn how to take good care of yourself very quickly.

We're here to help you, so call me if you have any questions or problems before your next appointment.

Thank you for all your help.

I don't like needles.

No one does, Alicia. This doesn't really hurt. Here. Now you try.

Then the drop of blood is put on a piece of paper called a test strip.

Then the strip is put in a meter and the meter shows you your blood sugar level.

Good. This booklet will tell you more about when and how to check your blood sugar.

It is also a diary so you can keep a record of your blood sugar numbers. We will review your diary together every time you come to the office.

Do you or Sarina have any questions about this or any of the other things we have discussed?

No. No.

I know this seems like a lot to learn, but you will learn how to take good care of yourself very quickly.

We're here to help you, so call me if you have any questions or problems before your next appointment.

Thank you for all your help.
Alicia knew she had a lot to learn. She started to read the brochures she got at the doctor’s office as soon as she got home. Then her son, Pablo, came home.

Hi, Mom! How are you? What happened at the doctor’s office?

I have diabetes, Pablo… but I will be fine.

Gee, Mom. That’s not good news.

Rico’s mom has diabetes and she says it’s fate. There is nothing anyone can do about it.

That’s not true. There’s a lot that I can do.

Mom’s right, Pablo. Aunt Margaret has had diabetes for a long time. She takes diabetes pills, takes good care of herself, and she’s 76 years old!

Six months later, Alicia and her husband, Richard, are walking in the town park. They have been walking once or twice a week since Alicia found out she had diabetes. On other days, Alicia walks with her girlfriends or sometimes with Sarina.

Are you ready, Alicia?

Almost. I just have to finish checking my blood sugar.
I really enjoy our walks, Richard. We seem to be sharing more than we have in years now that we do this together.

Yeah, I like it too. And, I seem to be sleeping better.

Me too! Except when your snoring keeps me awake.

Yeah, I like it too. And, I seem to be sleeping better.

I bet we can be home in two minutes if we walk fast. What do you say?

Okay!

Ohhh, Richard. I feel a little weak.

It's my fault. We were walking too fast.

You look like you have the low blood sugar problem you told me about.

Oh, Richard. We were in a hurry and I forgot my snack.

I didn't!

Here. Eat some of this candy I've been carrying for two months!
15 MINUTES LATER. ALICIA IS STILL SITTING ON THE BENCH. SHE’S SMILING AND LOOKS LIKE SHE IS FEELING BETTER.

I FEEL BETTER NOW, RICHARD. LET’S GO HOME.

LET’S WAIT A COUPLE OF MINUTES MORE, ALICIA. JUST TO BE SAFE.

THE GAME CAN WAIT. IT’S JUST ONE MORE GAME IN A MILLION GAMES. RIGHT?

HA.

BOY, I’M GLAD RICHARD HAD THAT CANDY. I WON’T FORGET MY SNACK AGAIN IF I GO FOR A LONG WALK? THAT’S FOR SURE.

WHAT IF RICHARD HADN’T BEEN THERE!

MOM, YOU LOOK GREAT TONIGHT.

THANK YOU, SARINA. I FEEL GOOD TOO.

AND, I WANT TO THANK ALL OF YOU FOR HELPING ME WITH MY EXERCISES AND REMINDING ME TO CHECK MY BLOOD SUGAR WHEN I FORGET TO CHECK IT…WHICH I STILL DO AT TIMES.

NO PROBLEM, MOM. IT’S BEEN FUN REMINDING YOU WHAT TO DO FOR A CHANGE!

I’M PROUD OF YOU, ALICIA.

WE’RE ALL PROUD OF YOU. YOU ARE DOING A GREAT JOB CONTROLLING YOUR DIABETES.
If you take medicine, always take it as directed (and don’t stop taking it without speaking to your doctor or nurse).

Check your blood sugar levels often.

Avoid stress and worry as much as you can.

Remember, you can control your diabetes by following these simple rules:

You can lead a full and happy life with diabetes, just like everyone else, by taking good care of yourself.

Stay active ... exercise, if you can, every day.

Check your blood sugar levels often.

Eat healthy foods ... every day.

See your doctor for regular checkups.

If you have diabetes, always check with your doctor before making any change in your diabetes treatment plan.

For more information, contact your doctor’s office or call the American Diabetes Association at 1-800-Diabetes or online at www.diabetes.org.