

Almost everyone knows one or more of the 24 million Americans with the disease. Those without diabetes can do their part to provide support for family, friends and co-workers who are already living with the disease.

Elizabeth Edelman, a type 1 diabetic and co-founder of Diabetes Daily (<http://www.diabetesdaily.com>), offers the following ways to provide valuable support to others living with diabetes.

- Do not be the diabetes police. It can be hurtful, unexpected and just plain rude when someone asks, "Should you be eating that?" says Edelman. People with diabetes are constantly managing and adjusting their nutrition and so they know best the effects specific foods can have on their own bodies. React to their nutrition choices as to anyone else's and don't judge every bite that goes in their mouth.
- Be prepared. A simple way to show support is by keeping a small supply of juice or candy in a kitchen cabinet, glove compartment or purse to battle lows. It is comforting to know that someone has a backup nearby.
- Understand diabetes is a full time job. Those who do not have diabetes don't fully understand exactly how the disease affects every aspect of a person's life all the time. Just having an appreciation for the fact that despite good days, diabetes never goes away can provide a great deal of moral support.
- Do not share horror stories. Often, in an attempt to show understanding, people share a story about a friend or relative who had diabetes and, as a result, suffered a serious consequence. Yes, diabetes is a serious disease, but it does not help to scare or worry anyone.

Know the type. Take the time to become educated about which specific type of diabetes – type 1, type 2, or gestational—a person has. Remember, one type is not better or worse than the other, so do not judge a person based on his or her diabetes type.

- Ask away. Asking questions with a genuine curiosity and desire to learn is almost always welcome and can empower a person with diabetes by providing an opportunity to educate others and share his or her experience. Edelman loves when she gets the chance to share her knowledge of diabetes.