



## Diabetes – Words To Know

People who have diabetes see and hear many words that are hard to understand. Here is a list of some of those words. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities wrote what they mean in plain language.

**A1C Test** - This is a blood test done by your doctor. It tells you the average amount of sugar in your blood over the past 3 months. Ask your doctor what numbers are good for you and be sure to write them down.

**Acute** - An illness would be called an acute illness if it starts suddenly, lasts a short amount of time, and then goes away.

**Appetizer** - a small serving of food or drink eaten before the main meal.

**Bad Fats** - there are different kinds of fats. “Bad” fats are also called **saturated** fats. They are mostly solid. For example, foods that have lots of “bad” fats are butter, cheese, red meat and coconut oil. Try to eat less than 55 grams of fat a day.

**Blood sugar monitoring** - testing how much sugar is in a sample of blood. This is your job.

**Calories** - this number is the amount of energy you get from the food you eat. It is also the amount of energy you use when you exercise.

**Carbohydrates** - a main source of energy. They come from sugar and starch or fiber. Try to eat between 45 to 60 grams of carbs per meal and 15 to 30 grams for snacks.

**Cardiovascular** - having to do with your heart and blood vessels.

**Causes** - the reason why something happens. For example, high sugar levels can cause heart disease.

**Cholesterol** - a type of fat-like substance your body makes. It is in your cells. Your body makes more Cholesterol than you need. Try to eat less than 200 mg of Cholesterol each day. Foods from animal products that have Cholesterol include eggs, dairy products (for example milk, butter, cheese), meat and shellfish (for example clams or lobster).

**Chronic** - it does not go away. You will have it a long time.

**Complication** - A condition that happens in addition to your diabetes. A problem that makes your diabetes harder to treat.

**Confidence level** - how sure you are about something. For example, on your action plan you say you will take a walk every day. Using a scale from 1 to 10, how sure you are about you following through and walking every day.

**Cons** - A reason not to do something.

**Constipation** - Having a hard time going to the bathroom or difficulty having a bowel movement.

**Diabetes** - a disease that happens when you have too much sugar in your blood. It also means you have a problem with turning the food you eat into energy.

- **Type 1 Diabetes** - the person does not make any insulin. Insulin is a chemical in your body that helps you turn the food you eat into energy.
- **Type 2 Diabetes** - the person makes some insulin. Insulin is a chemical in your body that helps you turn the food you eat into energy.

**Dietary Fiber** - a part of vegetables, fruits, beans or grains you eat that passes through your system and cannot be digested. Fiber helps you to digest other food. Look for foods with 5 grams or more of fiber.

**Digestive Health** - how well your body breaks down food.

**Diuretics** - a medicine that is also called a water pill. It makes you “pee” more.

**Dose** - how much medicine or drugs to take.

**Emergency Snack** - a sugary food to eat when your blood sugar is low.

**Endurance** - Being able to do something for a long time. Another word may be stamina.

**Energy** - the power you get from food or from exercising.

**Fat Free** - there is no fat in this food. Watch for added sugar or salt.

**Fats** - in food there are proteins, fats and carbohydrates. Your body needs fat. They give you energy. They help your body take in vitamins. For more information read the definitions for “good” fats and “bad” fats.

**Fiber** - a part of vegetables, fruits, beans or grains you eat that passes through your system and cannot be digested. Fiber helps you to digest other food. Look for foods with 5 grams or more of fiber.

**Flexibility** - being able to bend your body. Stretching can help your flexibility. It can also mean being willing to change your mind about something.

**Gestational Diabetes** - a woman who gets Diabetes when she is having a baby.

**Glucose** - the name of the kind of sugar your body gets from food. It gives your body energy.

**Good Fats** - these are also called **unsaturated** fats. They are mostly liquid. For example, foods that have “good” fats are vegetable oils (a few kinds are olive oil, canola oil, sunflower oil), nuts, seeds, and fish.

**Gut** - is another word for your stomach. It also can mean when you use your feelings to make a decision, you use your gut.

**High Blood Sugar** - too much sugar in your blood.

**High Carbohydrate** - 15 grams or more of sugary and starchy foods per serving.

**Hormone** - a chemical that can control growth. Your body can make this chemical. It travels around the body, sending out messages about how other body parts should work.

**Hypoglycemia** - Low Blood Sugar.

**Infection** - a sickness you get when germs get in your body.

**Insulin** - a hormone or substance that lets sugar get into your cells to give you energy.

**Kidney** - an organ in your body that removes waste and water from your blood.

**Lean meat** - meat with a small amount of fat.

**Limit** - keep to a set amount, control, reduce. Look for foods with 5 grams or more of fiber.

**Low Blood Sugar** - not enough sugar in your blood, called hypoglycemia.

**Low Carbohydrate** - around 5 grams of non-starchy vegetables.

**Medical Alert bracelet** - a bracelet that says you have diabetes or another serious medical condition. It lets people know you have that might help immediately. It is good to wear if you do not talk clearly.

**Minerals** - are solid substances found in nature. For example, salt, iron and calcium are minerals. They can be naturally found in food and drinks. Just like vitamins, your body needs minerals to be healthy.

**Monitor** - to watch or look for any changes

**Monounsaturated fats** - “good” fats. They are mostly liquid. For example, foods that have “good” fats are vegetable oils (a few kinds are olive oil, canola oil, sunflower oil), nuts, seeds, and fish.

**Navigate** - to understand which way you need to go.

**Nerves** - parts of the body that carry messages from the brain to other parts of the body.

**Neuropathy** - nerve damage. This may happen to people who have diabetes.

**Non-starchy vegetables** - such as salad, broccoli, spinach.

**Nutrient** - chemicals in food that are used by the body to work properly and keep you healthy.

**Obese** - overweight, too much body fat. A person weighs too much and it is not healthy.

**Omega-3 fatty acids** - is found in nuts and seeds and fish oil. It can reduce your risk of heart disease. 250 to 500 mg a day is recommended.

**Pancreas** - part of your body that makes insulin. Your body needs insulin to get energy out of sugar.

**P. A. R. T.** - You are an important person on your medical team.

- **Prepare** - keep track of your warning signs. Make a list of your concerns and questions. Tell your team about any changes in how you feel.
- **Ask** - ask questions.
- **Repeat** - after a doctor tells you what to do. Say what you heard. Tell the doctor the main points.
- **Take action** - tell the doctor if you are not able to do what they told you to do.

**Pedometer** - is a small device like a watch that you can wear on your wrist. It counts every step you take.

**Physical Activity** - Something you do with your body. Walking is a physical activity.

**Plate Method** - an easy way to plan meals. Divide your plate into 3 parts:

- $\frac{1}{2}$  vegetables
- $\frac{1}{4}$  protein
- $\frac{1}{4}$  starch

**Polyunsaturated fats** - a “good” fat. They are found in nuts, seeds, fish and some vegetable oils. Better for you than “bad” fats. The typical person should eat 44 to 77 grams of fat a day.

**Portion** - how much food you put on your plate.

**Prediabetes** - the amount of your sugar in your blood is high but not high enough to have diabetes Type 2.

**Prescription** - medicine your doctor tells you to take.

**Prevention** - Something you do to keep a bad thing from happening.

**Processed snack** - food that comes in a package. It will have more than one ingredient listed.

**Pros** - the reasons for doing something.

**Proteins** - your body uses protein to build muscles. Eggs, almonds, cottage cheese and chicken breast are examples of foods that have high amounts of protein.

**Resistance band** - a wide long elastic band (looks like a scarf). It is used when exercising. It helps build stronger muscles.

**Saturated fats** - there are different kinds of fats. Saturated fats are also called “Bad” fats. They are mostly solid. For example, foods that have lots of “bad” fats are butter, cheese, red meat and coconut oil. Try to eat less than 55 grams of fat a day.

**Serving size** - rules on how much food to eat. For example, one serving is 1 cup of fruit or ½ cup cooked rice or 3 ounces of meat. Food labels list how much food in in one serving.

**Sodium** - Salt.

**Starch** - a substance that is found in foods such as bread, rice, potatoes, dried beans.

**Strategy** - a plan to reach a goal.

**Stress** - is your body reacting to a difficult situation. You may feel worried, angry, nervous or frustrated.

**Symptom** - sign (of disease or sickness), indicator, warning. A change in your body that shows that there is something wrong.

**Textures** - how something looks and feels. For example, is it smooth, or rough?

**Thyroid** - a small gland in your neck that makes a hormone. This hormone is a substance that helps your cells get energy out of food. It can speed up using your food for energy or slow it down.

**Trans fats** - are saturated fats or “bad” fats. For more information read the definition for “bad” fats.

**Triggers** - are people, places, smells, sounds, tastes, or things that remind you of something that happen to you in the past. They can be good experiences or bad experiences. If you are “triggered” to remember something bad that happened, you may feel depressed, angry, or fearful for a period of time.

**Ultimately** - finally or at the end of the day.

**Unsaturated Fats** - are “good” fats. For more information read the definition for “good” fats.

**Vitamin** - a chemical that your body needs to grow and be healthy.

### **Resources Used To Create This Glossary**

These plain language definitions were reviewed and edited by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities from Green Mountain Self-Advocates. Definitions were adapted from information provided by the following resources.

“Everyday Words for Public Health Communication.” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services,  
<https://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/everydaywords/>

Lorig, K., González, V., Laurent, D., Plant, K. & Self-Management Resource Center, LLC. (2016). *The Diabetes Self-Management Program: An Evidence-Based Self-Management Workshop Originally Developed at Stanford University*. Palo Alto CA. Leader's Manual.

“Plain Language Medical Dictionary.” *University of Michigan Taubman Health Sciences Library*, <https://www.lib.umich.edu/taubman-health-sciences-library/plain-language-medical-dictionary>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Prevent T2 - A Proven Program To Prevent or Delay Type 2 Diabetes*. <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/prevention/resources/curriculum.html>