

Living Well with Diabetes

WHAT IS IT?

Living Well with Diabetes is a group-based, participatory class led by two trained peer leaders over six weekly sessions. Developed at Stanford in partnership with diabetes patients, diabetes nurse educators, nutritionists, and a diabetologist, the program covers all areas of the American Association of Diabetes Education Standards. Participants receive a book and learn about self-management of diabetes, nutrition/healthy eating, preventing low blood glucose, preventing complications, exercise, stress management, relaxation techniques, monitoring blood glucose, depression, positive thinking, communication, medications, working with healthcare professionals/the healthcare system, sick days, skin and foot care, and future plans. The program does not cover the physical process of glucose monitoring, patient-specific medications, or insulin injection. Known in literature as the “Diabetes Self-Management Program (DSMP),” participants use action planning, brainstorming, and problem-solving to identify and pursue health goals.

WHO IS IT FOR?

The program is for any adult (age >18) with Type 2 Diabetes. Patients with Type 1 Diabetes are better suited for Living Well for Better Health. **Living Well with Diabetes** is especially valuable for older adults, patients with comorbid chronic conditions, individuals with rising health risks, and those who are lonely or fearful. It is excellent for patients with comorbid depression. The program is not appropriate for individuals who will disrupt group dynamics or for those acutely incapacitated by severe illness or physical limitations.

WHAT DOES IT DO?

The program covers the “street smarts” of living with diabetes, increasing participants’ self-efficacy and improving knowledge and beliefs that contribute to behavior change and improved self-management. A randomized controlled trial showed improvements in depression, communication with physicians, healthy eating, patient activation, and self-efficacy. A more recent pre-post study among 1,242 health plan members confirmed an A1C benefit of -0.9% in participants with a baseline A1C >9%. Benefits were also seen in depression, illness intrusiveness, hypoglycemia symptoms, medication adherence, and the proportion receiving recommended tests (e.g., foot exam, eye exam, cholesterol). Measurable changes are typically seen about six months post-intervention as patients enact life changes.

HOW TO DISCUSS WITH PATIENTS

When discussing the program with patients, approach the conversation with optimism, empathy, and excitement. Understand that managing diabetes involves significant challenges, such as balancing healthcare, changing behaviors, and managing symptoms. Acknowledge these struggles and express that you understand their difficulties. Share your excitement about the program’s potential to help them. Highlight that the program leaders are peers who have faced similar challenges and found great value in the group classes. Many patients like them have experienced significant improvement. Let your patient know you expect them to return with new strategies, goals, and questions, and that you’ll use this opportunity to tailor their treatment plan and support their efforts. Emphasize that the program is both safe and enjoyable. Encourage patients to bring a friend, family member, or caregiver to attend with them. This can help involve others in addressing their needs, concerns, and motivations. Promote the program as a way to connect with others who share similar concerns. Emphasize the opportunity for peer support, sharing experiences, and building a support network. Explain how the skills and knowledge gained can directly benefit their daily routine and overall well-being.



What participants say:

“The program leaders were professional and knowledgeable but most importantly they were caring individuals who sincerely had our best interests at heart. They wanted us to be able to successfully manage our diabetes and live life in a healthy manner. They were open in sharing their own life experience and how the tools have helped them to live a healthier lifestyle. I appreciated their guidance through the classes.”

- 86% would recommend this program to a friend or family member
- 94% were satisfied with the quality of the program?
- 90% were satisfied with the leader(s) of the program?



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