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Diabetes? Get Organized!

Type 2 diabetes affects **21 million Americans**. Poorly controlled diabetes can also affect every organ of the body and cause damage to the kidneys, eyes, heart, blood vessels, and nerves. Good diabetes self-care is vital in order to avoid life-threatening complications. Yet people with diabetes often find the stress of daily diabetes management overwhelming.

Doctors and diabetes educators encourage their patients with diabetes to make many lifestyle changes. These changes involve meal planning, exercise, stress management, blood sugar testing and possibly medications. In addition, your doctor will recommend a schedule of follow-up visits, blood tests and exams with specialists. What's more, there is on-going paperwork and important information to keep track of; doctors' phone numbers, insurance, medical expenses and sick day plans. If you have diabetes, it is essential that you work closely with your doctor and your diabetes educator, participate in daily self-care regimes and that you keep diabetes related information current and organized.

Thinking through your self-care will help you feel in control of your diabetes and give you the peace of mind that you are taking good care of yourself. Gina Barbetta, MS, RD, CDE, CD-N, co-author of *My Diabetes Organizer™: The essential planner and record-keeper for people with type 2 diabetes* gives the following tips for people with diabetes: First, breakdown "to do's" into time frames. For instance, tests/appointments to schedule during the course of the year, self-care tasks to perform every day, and sick day rules for when you don't feel well. Second, develop a system for keeping track of your diabetes related paperwork so that your health information is at your fingertips and up-to-date.

If you have diabetes, here are some ways to organize for the best self-care:

1. **Each Year:** With your doctor, set personal health goals and mark up a calendar for the coming year with reminders to schedule follow-up visits and recommended screening tests. *The best way to start with your diabetes plan is with a visit to your doctor and/or your certified diabetes educator. With your diabetes team, set your goals for the year and write them down. Your goals may include reducing your A1c, losing weight, lowering your blood cholesterol and lowering your blood pressure. Plan with your doctor how you are going to achieve your goals. At this time, mark your calendar with your doctor's recommendations for follow-ups during the coming year: have your teeth, eyes and feet checked by specialists, get a flu vaccine, and any other advised screening tests. Ask your doctor for referrals to the other specialists (ie. foot doctor, kidney, doctor, and neurologist).*
2. **Each Day:** To meet your goals, your plan will likely include lifestyle changes, blood glucose testing and may include medications. These are the things that you are going to do every day. *In the beginning, develop a daily chart or journal to track how you are doing with your plan. A journal is a very effective way to turn these changes to your lifestyle into lifelong habits!*
3. **In Case You Feel Sick:** There are times when you do not feel at your best. It could be that you are experiencing an episode of blood sugar that is too high or too low, or it could be simply that you have a cold. For people with diabetes, it is very important that you have a plan for these times and know what actions to take and when to call your doctor.
Keep a notebook or file at home and record the following as recommended by your doctor:
 - *Actions to take when you are sick, and*
 - *Actions to take when your blood sugar is testing too low or too high**This notebook is also a good place to record questions or concerns that come up between doctor visits. Since it may be months between visits, bring this notebook with you to your checkups so that you keep a running log of issues and the doctors' advice.*
4. **Organize the Paper!** Set up some files for keeping track of the paperwork related to treating your diabetes. Quick access to this information will save you time and give you peace of mind.

Here are some of the files that you will want to consider setting up: your diabetes team directory, a medications log, your health history, your family health history, medical expenses, insurance, and medical suppliers.

Authors Gina Barbetta, MS, RD, CD-N, CDE and Valerie Rossi created, *My Diabetes Organizer*[™]: *The essential planner and record-keeper for people with type 2 diabetes* to help people with diabetes manage their self-care. This innovative book puts the health information, goals and plans for successful self-care at the fingertips of people with type 2 diabetes. It is intended that readers will take this book from the kitchen table to the doctor's office and back home, putting the elements of diabetes self-care into an effective, working plan.

To help readers set goals, save time and have better control of their health, *My Diabetes Organizer*[™] features include 12-month checkup charts, customizable plans for nutrition, exercise, testing and emergencies and a diabetes team directory. For ease-of-use and convenience, the book features contains a filing system for medical bills, insurance, medications, news & advice and more. There is also a pullout 30-day journal, *The Daily Tracker* that is designed to help readers get into the routine of daily blood sugar testing, medicating, meal planning and other diabetes self-care.

About the Authors: Gina Barbetta, MS, RD, CDE, CD-N is a registered dietitian, certified diabetes educator and nutrition consultant with over 15 years of experience in the diabetes and weight management field, which includes clinical research on diabetes-related topics with Yale University, School of Medicine. Ms Barbetta is published in scientific journals including the *New England Journal of Medicine*, *Lancet*, and the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*. Valerie Rossi, an organizer by nature, embarked on this project to help family members get better control of all of the issues surrounding type 2 diabetes. This book will be available at www.diabetesorganizer.com and in bookstores in September 2006.