

# Peer support and diabetes

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Peer support is a way for you to connect with people who also face the daily challenges of managing diabetes. Sharing your experiences with other people who have diabetes can help you feel less alone.

We can help you find out about peer support and how to access it in your area.

“It’s nice to be able to contact someone who’s exactly the same as you. They give you that little bit of encouragement. You may be having a flat day and you just want to go, ‘Oh, I don’t want to get up for work’, and that someone is saying, ‘No, you can do it’ ... I think it’s great.”

James, 26, person with diabetes



## What is peer support?

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Peer support is when people living with a chronic condition (like diabetes) give or receive support from one another.

Many people who have diabetes have never talked to anyone else with diabetes, even though they may want to. This can feel very isolating.

People with diabetes may access peer support because:

- family and friends, despite their best efforts, can't fully understand what it's like to live with diabetes
- healthcare professionals may not always have the time to talk about all aspects of living with diabetes.

Peer support is a way for people with diabetes to share their:

- knowledge and skills
- insights and experiences
- thoughts and concerns
- feelings about living with diabetes.

This can happen in the form of organised face-to-face peer support groups or one-to-one telephone support, casual conversation, or through various technologies such as SMS texts and online communities like Facebook, Twitter and online forums.

## What to expect from peer support

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Connecting with other people who have diabetes can help in many ways. You may:

- feel less alone – having someone to talk to when diabetes gets you down or who can provide encouragement can really help.
- learn from others about self-management (how to put medical advice into practice, share helpful tips, boost your motivation)

- be able to share tips about access to healthcare professionals and community resources
- have improved health and wellbeing overall.

## What not to expect from peer support

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Peer support can lead to many positive experiences but there are a few things to think about:

- It doesn't replace the advice you get from your healthcare professional. Always ask your healthcare team before making changes to your diabetes management
- It may not be the right fit for you, as it's not a one-size-fits-all approach. Some people prefer not to talk about their feelings, or would prefer to do so with a health professional
- It's unlikely to give you the answers to all of your problems. Peer support can be a great source of information and advice, but it won't necessarily solve all of your diabetes-related concerns.

If you're unsure about whether to join a peer support group or community, talk with people you trust about your thoughts and feelings. Also consider talking about this with your diabetes healthcare professional – they can help you work out what kind of support is going to be the most helpful for you.

“Over the years I've met a few friends with diabetes. Every now and then we have a chat about how things are going. It's definitely helpful to have people who can relate to it.”

Lorna, 62, person with diabetes

## More information and support

There are lots of different sources of information and support. Talk with your healthcare professional team about which ones might be right for you.

### Great Britain Diabetes Online Community (GBDOC)

The Great Britain Diabetes Online Community uses Twitter #gbdoc for discussions, support and a weekly 'tweetchat'.

## How we help

### Diabetes UK

We're fighting for a world where diabetes can do no harm. And as the UK's leading diabetes charity, it's our job to tackle the diabetes crisis. We provide information, advice and support to people with all types of diabetes so they can learn to live well with their condition.

And we bring people together so they can learn from each other and get to grips with diabetes. Visit our website **[www.diabetes.org.uk/community](http://www.diabetes.org.uk/community)**

Our helpline is managed by trained counsellors there to listen, give support and answer questions. Call **0345 123 2399**

You can meet other people with diabetes at one of our local support groups.

Visit **[www.diabetes.org.uk/support-groups](http://www.diabetes.org.uk/support-groups)**

Or chat to others online in our support forum at **[www.diabetes.org.uk/forum](http://www.diabetes.org.uk/forum)**

And if you're on social media, join our online community on Facebook or follow us at **@DiabetesUK** on Twitter.