

Facing challenges together is a part of being married. But when a child is diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, the stress related to managing the condition can take a toll on a marriage. What are some of the ways a marriage can be affected?

### **Effects on Marriage**

- Communication barriers - Parents may handle their child's diagnosis differently, but might not talk about it. This can result in limited interaction and communication between the partners.
- Blaming - Couples may begin to blame each other for their child's diagnosis or develop anger about their spouse's level of involvement in caring for their child.
- Lack of sleep - Lack of sleep due to late night blood glucose checks can affect mood and temper.
- Financial Issues - A Type 1 Diabetes diagnosis may lead to increased financial obligations which can increase stress on the marriage.
- Limited Intimacy - Due to stress and pressure, many couples give up on their sexual life. Limited or no sexual intercourse is one of the biggest factors in distancing spouses from each other, as they find no charm in their marital life.

What can you do to keep stress associated with your child's type 1 diabetes diagnosis and care from hurting your marriage?

### **Coping Strategies**

- Don't blame your partner for the diagnosis - We do not know how diabetes happens.
- Communicate - Talk about the stress associated with taking care of a child with type 1 diabetes before resentment builds up.
- Be clear about responsibilities - Often, one parent is more comfortable (and possibly better) at the day-to-day tasks of their child's diabetes management. The other parent can still play a vital role (grocery shopping, downloading pump data, ordering supplies, etc.)
- Connect with other families - Through in-person support groups or online forums, couples can meet other parents of children with type 1 diabetes, and can talk to someone who "gets it." Consider attending the [Children with Diabetes Friends for Life Conference](#) or a Family Diabetes Camp.
- Marriage care - Taking care of yourself and your marriage needs to be a priority. Set and keep a "dates night" each week to enjoy each other's company as a couple.
- Find ways to reduce costs - Ask your child's doctor about patient support programs that provide insulin at reduced cost during times of financial strain. Consider

switching to lower cost supplies, including low cost blood glucose test strips. Ask for 90 day versus one month prescriptions to cut down on copays (4 per year versus 12 for the same supplies). Your certified diabetes educator should be able to help with money saving strategies.

- Seek counseling – Sometimes involving a third party can help couples in learning to communicate better. Ask your child’s doctor if they have a referral for a therapist who may have prior experience helping couples whose child has a chronic condition.

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*This document is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Our aim is to promote active participation in your care and treatment by providing information and education. Questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options should be discussed with your physician.*

## **Recommended**

[Diabetes Camps and Conferences](#)

[Siblings](#)

[Sources of Support](#)

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## **Sources**

[The effect of a child’s chronic illness on marriage - A Sweet Life](#)

[Marital stability and marital satisfaction in families of children with disabilities: Chicken or egg? — ERIC](#)

[Diamonds or dust: Keeping your marriage together while your child fights for life — Arkansas Children’s Hospital](#)

[Families with children with diabetes: Implications of parent stress for parent and child](#)

[health — Journal of Pediatric Psychology](#)

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