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# Overcoming Resistance to Therapy Intensification in Type 2 Diabetes:

A Patient Self-Assessment Tool  
and Conversation Guide

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# Using the Patient Self-Assessment Tool and Conversation Guide

You know that early blood sugar (blood glucose) management leads to better health outcomes for people with type 2 diabetes. But therapeutic inertia—or delays in advancing treatment—can keep people from reaching their A1C goals. Having the right conversations during clinical visits can help you overcome this inertia and get your patients' A1C where it needs to be.

This provider guide is a companion to the patient self-assessment tool, **Your Type 2 Diabetes Treatment: Get Ready for Your Visit** (see appendix for sample tool). Use this guide to quickly scan for patient answers that need a timely response—and find tips to help you respond effectively.

We know you have limited time with patients, so try to:

- Talk about A1C at every visit
- Cover one or two additional timely topics at each visit—like if they say they don't understand their treatment plan or can't afford their medicines
- Assess for hypoglycemia at every visit

Remember that you can always refer your patients to **diabetes self-management education and support (DSMES) services**, a certified form of diabetes education that is usually reimbursed by Medicare and insurance. During these sessions they can meet with a diabetes educator that may be a **certified diabetes care and education specialist (CDCES)** and receive other resources for additional help. And use this tool again at future visits to facilitate more of these important conversations.

## Therapeutic inertia at a glance

In diabetes care, therapeutic inertia means being slow to advance the treatment plan when A1C is too high. For example, waiting to intensify insulin therapy or add an additional medicine can be signs of therapeutic inertia.

The American Diabetes Association® (ADA) recommends advancing treatment if a patient doesn't reach their A1C goal within three to six months.

This publication is sponsored by the Overcoming Therapeutic Inertia Initiative of the ADA with strategic sponsors AstraZeneca and Sanofi, plus supporting sponsors Merck and Novo Nordisk. For more information on overcoming therapeutic inertia in diabetes in your practice, visit [therapeuticinertia.diabetes.org](https://therapeuticinertia.diabetes.org).

# Response Guide

## 1 How long have you had diabetes?

Action tips	Talking points
For <b>any answer</b> :	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ <b>Keep in mind</b> that therapeutic inertia can happen at any time in your patient's journey.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ “Managing diabetes is a journey. Sometimes it may feel like one step forward and two steps back. That’s okay. My job is to help you stay on track and meet your goals.”</li></ul>

## 2 How do you think your diabetes treatment is going?

Action tips	Talking points
If answered <b>Great—I’m totally on top of it</b> :	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ <b>Celebrate</b> their successes.</li><li>■ <b>Remind</b> them that you can help if anything changes.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ “I’m glad to hear that! And you know I’m always here to support you and help you meet your goals.”</li></ul>
If answered <b>Okay—but it could be better</b> or <b>Not so good—something needs to change</b> :	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ <b>Remind</b> them that you can help.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ “Thanks for being honest about how you’re feeling. Managing diabetes is hard, but I’m here to help. Let’s take a closer look at what’s going on.”</li></ul>

**3 Many people take more than 1 medicine to treat their diabetes. Are you okay with the idea of taking more than 1 medicine?**

Action tips	Talking points
If answered <b>Yes</b> :	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Remind</b> them that diabetes changes over time and most people need more than one diabetes medicine to meet their goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ “I’m glad you’re okay with this. Diabetes changes over time, so it’s common to change medicines or to need a combination of medicines.”</li> </ul>
If answered <b>No</b> or <b>I’m not sure</b> :	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Ask</b> why they feel this way and listen to their concerns.</li> <li>■ <b>Remind</b> them that diabetes changes over time and most people need more than one diabetes medicine to meet their goals.</li> <li>■ If cost is an issue, <b>refer</b> them to diabetes assistance programs in their area for low-cost medicines.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ “Adding a new medicine—like insulin or a new pill—doesn’t mean your treatment plan is failing. Adjusting your medicines is one of the best tools we have to successfully manage your diabetes.”</li> <li>■ “It’s normal for your medicines to change over time and we’ll work together to find the right combination for you.”</li> </ul>

## 4 Do you take your medicines on schedule and as prescribed?

Action tips	Talking points
If answered <b>Yes</b> :	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Ask</b> them to explain their medicine schedule and confirm they're taking each medicine at the right time.</li> <li>■ <b>Ask</b> if they ever take less medication than they should, even if they do take it on schedule.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ “Can you tell me when and how you take each of your medicines?”</li> </ul>
If answered <b>No</b> or <b>Sometimes</b> :	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Ask</b> what gets in the way and work together to find solutions.</li> <li>■ <b>Ask</b> if they ever cut down on a dose to make it last longer.</li> <li>■ <b>Remind</b> them that taking their medicines helps keep their diabetes in check.</li> <li>■ <b>Refer them</b> to diabetes education or a pharmacist in their area.</li> <li>■ If cost is an issue, <b>refer</b> them to diabetes assistance programs in their area for low-cost medicines.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ “Can you tell me what gets in the way of taking your medicines?”</li> <li>■ “What would help you take your medicines as recommended?”</li> <li>■ “Even if you feel healthy now, it’s important to keep taking your medicines. That’s the way to stay healthy and prevent problems down the road.”</li> <li>■ “How do you feel about working with a diabetes education specialist who can help you come up with a plan that works for you?”</li> </ul>

## 5 Do you check your blood sugar on schedule?

Action tips	Talking points
If answered <b>Yes</b> :	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Ask</b> to see their blood sugar log and confirm they've been checking at the right times.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ “Tell me about checking your blood sugar. Do you think you're getting all the information you need to manage your blood sugar? Let's look at your log together.”</li> </ul>
If answered <b>No</b> or <b>Sometimes</b> :	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Ask</b> them to explain their current schedule for checking their blood sugar.</li> <li>■ <b>Ask</b> what gets in the way and work together to find solutions.</li> <li>■ <b>Remind</b> them why checking blood sugar is important and review their log together.</li> <li>■ If a blood glucose meter isn't working for them, <b>talk about</b> different options, like switching to a continuous glucose monitor (CGM).</li> <li>■ If cost is an issue, <b>refer</b> them to diabetes assistance programs in their area for low-cost supplies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ “What's making it hard to check your blood sugar?”</li> <li>■ “Blood sugar testing helps guide the treatment decisions we make together. The numbers tell us what's working well and what we need to change. Let's take a look.”</li> </ul>

## 6 The last time you got your A1C checked, were you meeting your goal?

Action tips	Talking points
If answered <b>Yes, my A1C was where it needs to be:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Ask</b> to see their blood sugar log and confirm that their daily numbers align with their targets and A1C results.</li> <li>■ If they're hitting their A1C goal, <b>celebrate</b> their success and make a plan for their next A1C test.</li> <li>■ <b>Check</b> for frequent low blood sugar using log data, or meter/CGM data. Sometimes lots of low blood sugars can cause misleading A1C results.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ “Let’s take a look at your blood sugar log to make sure your daily numbers match your A1C.”</li> <li>■ “I’m so glad to see your A1C is on target— that means your treatment plan is working! Let’s talk about when we should check your A1C next.”</li> </ul>
If answered <b>No, my A1C was too high:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Ask</b> if they’re having trouble following their plan and work together to find solutions.</li> <li>■ If their A1C or daily blood sugar numbers are high, <b>make changes</b> to their plan together.</li> <li>■ <b>Schedule</b> a follow-up visit to see if treatment changes are working.</li> <li>■ <b>Refer</b> them to diabetes education in their area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ “Getting your daily blood sugar in your target range will help us meet your A1C goal.”</li> <li>■ “Let’s take a look at your blood sugar log. When your A1C or daily blood sugar numbers are high, that tells us we may need to adjust your medicines or make other changes to help you reach your goals.”</li> </ul>

**6** The last time you got your A1C checked, were you meeting your goal?  
(continued)

Action tips	Talking points
If answered <b>I'm not sure</b> :	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Talk about</b> A1C and why it's important.</li> <li>■ <b>Remind</b> them of their A1C goal or set a new one together.</li> <li>■ If their A1C or daily blood sugar numbers are high, <b>make changes</b> to their plan together.</li> <li>■ <b>Schedule</b> a follow-up visit to see if treatment changes are working.</li> <li>■ <b>Refer</b> them to diabetes education in their area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Knowing your A1C is really important—when it's too high, it means that your blood sugar is running high most of the time. And that puts you at higher risk for complications from diabetes.”</li> <li>■ “A1C shows your average blood sugar over the past two to three months. So instead of a single moment, it shows how well your treatments have been working over time.”</li> <li>■ “Your A1C and daily blood sugar numbers tell us whether your treatment plan is working. If these numbers are too high, we can work together to bring them down.”</li> <li>■ “Let's start by taking a look at your blood sugar log.”</li> </ul>

## 7 What do you do when you need help managing your diabetes?

Action tips	Talking points
<p>If answered <b>I call someone on my care team, like my doctor, nurse, dietitian, or pharmacist</b> or <b>I call my diabetes educator</b> or <b>I ask friends and family</b> or <b>I go to an organization in my community</b>:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Ask</b> if their support system meets all their needs.</li> <li>■ <b>Remind</b> them that their care team is always here to help.</li> <li>■ <b>Ask</b> if they have attended a diabetes education program recently.</li> <li>■ <b>Refer</b> to diabetes education in their area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ “Do you feel like you’re getting all the help you need, or is there something I can help you with today?”</li> <li>■ “Is there a certain part of your treatment plan that you often have questions about?”</li> </ul>
<p>If answered <b>I look on the internet</b>:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Ask</b> about the sources they use and suggest trusted options, like government and organization sites.</li> <li>■ <b>Remind</b> them that their care team can answer questions, too.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ “Can you tell me about the websites you use? It can be hard to find trustworthy information online. But sites ending in .gov and <a href="https://www.diabetes.org">diabetes.org</a> can be good resources.”</li> <li>■ “If you have questions, we’re here to help! Your care team can share resources with you and help you find the answers you need. <b>1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383)</b> is also a good resource.”</li> </ul>
<p>If answered <b>I don’t know what to do—I feel like I’m in this alone</b>:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Ask</b> them to tell you more and listen to their concerns.</li> <li>■ <b>Remind</b> them they’re not alone and you’re here to help.</li> <li>■ <b>Refer</b> them to diabetes education, mental health professionals, social workers, or community resources in their area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ “I’m so sorry you’re feeling alone. Can you tell me more about what’s going on?”</li> <li>■ “There are people who want to help you—including me and the rest of your care team. Let’s make a plan to get you the support you need.”</li> </ul>

## 8 What are the biggest challenges you have in managing your diabetes?

Action tips	Talking points
If answered <b>I don't understand my treatment plan:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Ask</b> what they don't understand and help fill in the gaps.</li> <li>■ <b>Remind</b> them that you're always here for questions.</li> <li>■ <b>Refer</b> them to diabetes education in their area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ “Let's go through your plan together and see where you're getting stuck. Can you tell me what you're not sure about?”</li> </ul>
If answered <b>I have trouble sticking to my treatment schedule:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Ask</b> what makes it hard to stay on schedule—and what they think might help.</li> <li>■ <b>Refer</b> them to diabetes education in their area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ “Between checking your blood sugar and taking your medicines, the treatment schedule can feel like a lot to handle. But I'm here to help. Let's make a plan to get you back on track.</li> </ul>
If answered <b>I have trouble paying for my medicines, devices, or supplies</b> or <b>I have trouble getting to my appointments:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Remind</b> them there's help available.</li> <li>■ <b>Refer</b> them to diabetes education, diabetes assistance programs, or community resources in their area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ “I'm so glad you let me know. How would you feel about me connecting you to people who can help with that?”</li> </ul>

**8** What are the biggest challenges you have in managing your diabetes?  
(continued)

Action tips	Talking points
<p>If answered <b>I have trouble eating healthy</b> or <b>I have trouble getting enough physical activity</b>:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Ask</b> if these are the goals they want to work on.</li> <li>■ If they're open to it, <b>refer</b> them to nutrition, fitness, or diabetes education programs in their area.</li> <li>■ <b>Refer</b> them to diabetes education in their area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ “Making these changes can be hard, but getting support can help. And it can make a big difference in managing your diabetes. Is this a goal you want to work on?”</li> <li>■ “There’s no one-size-fits-all ‘diabetes diet’. But there are some simple guidelines that can help you find a healthy eating plan that works for you. And I can connect you with a specialist who can help.”</li> <li>■ “If you haven’t been active before, it’s okay to start slow. Even a short walk each day can have real health benefits—and you can work up to more activity over time.”</li> </ul>
<p>If answered <b>I feel overwhelmed or depressed about my diabetes</b>:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Remind</b> them it’s normal to feel overwhelmed or depressed, but help is available.</li> <li>■ <b>Refer</b> them to mental health professionals or community resources in their area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ “Having diabetes means you have a lot on your mind—and it’s normal to feel burnt out. Can you tell me more about how you’re feeling?”</li> <li>■ “How would you feel about me connecting you to people who can help you with these feelings?”</li> </ul>

# Appendix: Patient Self-Assessment Tool

## Your Type 2 Diabetes Treatment: Get Ready for Your Visit

Your diabetes care team can help you find a diabetes treatment plan that works for you. Take a few minutes to answer these questions so your care team will know how to make the most of your visit.

First, let's see where you are in your diabetes journey.

### 1 How long have you had diabetes?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- More than 10 years

### 2 How do you think your diabetes treatment is going?

- Great—I'm totally on top of it
- Okay—but it could be better
- Not so good—something needs to change

Now let's find out how you're doing with specific parts of your care.

### 3 Many people take more than 1 medicine to treat their diabetes. Are you okay with the idea of taking more than 1 medicine?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

### 4 Do you take your medicines on schedule and as prescribed?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

# Appendix: Patient Self-Assessment Tool

**5 Do you check your blood sugar on schedule?**

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

**6 The last time you got your A1C checked, were you meeting your goal?**

- Yes, my A1C was where it needs to be
- No, my A1C was too high
- I'm not sure

**7 What do you do when you need help managing your diabetes?**

- I call someone on my care team, like my doctor, nurse, dietitian, or pharmacist
- I call my diabetes educator
- I ask friends and family
- I go to an organization in my community
- I look on the internet
- I don't know what to do—I feel like I'm in this alone
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**8 What are the biggest challenges you have in managing your diabetes?**

- My treatment plan
- Sticking to my treatment schedule
- Paying for my medicines, devices, or supplies
- Getting to my appointments
- Eating healthy
- Getting enough physical activity
- Feeling overwhelmed or depressed about my diabetes
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**9 What other things would you like to talk about?**

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Great—now share your answers with your diabetes care team during your visits. That way, they can help you get the information and support you need to keep your diabetes treatment on track to meet your goals.

[diabetes.org](http://diabetes.org) | Your Type 2 Diabetes Treatment



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# Resources

Use these resources to help the your patients with diabetes get the additional support and services they need.

## Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support (DSMES) Services

Find a local ADA-recognized diabetes education program. These services focus on your concerns about diabetes. They will also empower you with the knowledge and skills to manage it. You can find a program in your area at [diabetes.org/findaprogram](https://diabetes.org/findaprogram). The Association of Diabetes Care and Education Specialists also accredits diabetes education programs. You may be able to find additional programs at [diabeteseducator.org/find](https://diabeteseducator.org/find).

## Living with Type 2 Diabetes® Program

For a person learning to live with type 2 diabetes, the journey can sometimes be overwhelming. The ADA is here to provide support every step of the way. Through the ADA's Living with Type 2 Diabetes program, you can receive guidance on emotional well-being, healthy eating, getting active, and more through six informational e-booklets, and a monthly e-newsletter. Sign up at [diabetes.org/living](https://diabetes.org/living).

## Diabetes Mental Health Directory

The ADA's Mental Health Provider Directory lists licensed mental health providers with expertise in providing counselling and emotional support to meet the needs of people with diabetes. Find a mental health professional in your area at [professional.diabetes.org/MHListing](https://professional.diabetes.org/MHListing).

## Center for Information

Representatives at the ADA's Center for Information are available to guide you to diabetes information and resources, as well as local programs and events. To reach these representatives, call **1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383)** or email [askada@diabetes.org](mailto:askada@diabetes.org).

## Diabetes Food Hub

The ADA's Diabetes Food Hub is a new cooking and recipe destination made for people living with diabetes and their families. Save time during your busy week using the interactive meal planner, a grocery list you can edit, and heathy tips from ADA food and nutrition experts at [diabetesfoodhub.org](https://diabetesfoodhub.org).

## Living with Diabetes Ask the Experts Q&A

ADA's Q&A series aims to educate people living with type 2 diabetes about healthy lifestyle solutions. Topics include nutrition, how to manage stress, and getting active. The phone-in and online format provides a community where people can ask questions of ADA diabetes experts and hear from others who might share similar experiences. Hear full programs and audio clips at [diabetes.org/experts](https://diabetes.org/experts).

For additional resources, visit [diabetes.org/resources](https://diabetes.org/resources).

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**There is nothing we  
can't accomplish  
when we are  
Connected for Life.**

