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Forming a diabetes partnership:

10 steps to improve your relationship with your doctor

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- 1.) Come with a list of questions.** Keep your list focused on the most pressing questions. Include any health-related changes since your last visit. Don't wait until the last minute to bring up something important. Ask for clarification if something is not easy to understand. Feel free to take notes during your appointment. You may want to bring along a friend or your spouse to help you remember what gets discussed.
- 2.) Include your highs and lows.** What brings you joy? Where do you struggle? Tell your doctor if you feel down or depressed, which is more common with diabetes. Many people are reluctant to discuss depression, but this is very important.
- 3.) Bring your supplies.** For each visit bring in your log book and/or glucose meter, or any supplies that need attention. Also, bring a list of your current medications, which is often provided at the end your appointment. Include a list of your supplements, too. Some record keeping systems combine blood sugars/ food/ medications in one place. Write down what you actually do, not just what your instructions say, without judgement or self-criticism.
- 4.) Talk openly about complementary medicine.** Many people are use a variety of treatments and practices, but keep this important information to themselves. Discuss your other practitioners with your doctor, so that they can work together for your health. Ask about options you come across. Acupuncture, naturopathy and other approaches can have a valuable contribution to your diabetes management. It is important that all your treatments be viewed in one place to prevent problems.
- 5.) Mention changes in your sex life.** Even though sexual issues can signal larger health problem, but many people feel embarrassed to bring up sex. You can place your question in the context of a larger health issue. Say, "I am concerned about blood sugar because

my interest in sex has dwindled," or "How do my periods affect my glucose levels?" If it is very detailed, this may need to be a full appointment in itself.

6.) Discuss physical activity. Let your provider know about any recent physical activity, or if it is not happening for you. There are so many more options than just going to the gym. What can you do? Where do you get stuck?

7.) Include sleep in your conversation. A good night's sleep is very important in both treating and preventing diabetes. Whether you have trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, snoring or waking up exhausted, tell your doctor or care provider about your nightly experience.

8.) Be open about your weight. Though two-thirds of all Americans carry extra weight, it still is hard for many people to discuss. Ask your doctor about how weight can impact your heart, blood sugar and more. Keep in mind that you can be very healthy in a wide weight range.

9.) Use all available resources. Consider using your smartphone to record the conversation. Ask if you can follow up by e-mail or phone if you have additional questions, or if a nurse is available to take your questions. Electronic medical records may be much easier now. Ask your physician for apps and website recommendations where you can find reliable research on your condition. Find a support group.

10.) Express thanks. Include gratitude in your conversation for this valuable partnership. You will be acknowledging the effort you make together toward your long term good health. It literally softens your heart.