

# Managing T1D in Demanding Jobs

For anyone working in environments where schedules are irregular, physical demands are high, or stepping away is not always easy, managing T1D can become very challenging. While no two bodies or jobs are the same, below are common patterns, challenges, and strategies that can help you feel more prepared and supported at work. If you need further support, please contact your healthcare team. Whether you are starting in a new career or have been managing both work and diabetes for years, remember that you are not alone and you have the right to have your needs addressed in every professional space!

## ★ BUILD A PORTABLE DIABETES SYSTEM

The goal is just to make things easier in the moment, so you are not scrambling when you need something quickly. Designate a few accessible spots at your job site to store fast-acting carbs, because lows never happen when it is convenient.

- Have extras if you can, like supplies, insulin, or anything your devices rely on.
- Sometimes it may help to have quick, low-key options (like gummies or gels) for moments where you cannot fully stop what you are doing.



## ★ LEARN YOUR JOB'S GLYCEMIC PATTERNS

Every job may hit your blood sugar a little differently, and it may not always be predictable at first. Make time to track patterns across your shifts. Not everything will make sense right away, but over time trends will start to show up.

- If your job is more physically demanding, you may notice lows that do not hit until hours later. Your body may still be using up energy even after you have stopped moving.
- If your job is more high-pressure or performance-based, you may get random adrenaline spikes where your blood sugar climbs even if you have not eaten. Sometimes, it may drop just as fast once things calm down.
- If you are working long stretches without breaks, you can end up with slow creeping highs or sudden crashes just from the inconsistency.

## ★ FUEL FOR THE JOB, NOT JUST THE CLOCK

The typical breakfast-lunch-dinner routine may not always work with unpredictable jobs. It is a bit of trial and error, but once you find what works, it makes a huge difference.

- Sometimes it may help to think more in terms of what your body needs for the work you are about to do, not just what time it is.
  - Having some protein and fat before a long shift can help keep blood sugars more stable.
  - Instead of relying on big meals, eating smaller snacks can be way easier to manage.
- If you are active, you might also need to adjust insulin a bit differently (like under-bolusing slightly), just to avoid those sudden drops.



*"In the beginning, [my career] involved a lot of trial and error, and then it became about preparation. Learning how to prepare is the most important part. For me, it meant facing challenges, working through them, and figuring out solutions... then remembering those solutions so I wouldn't encounter the same problems again."*

- David Campbell, Professional Dancer and Massage Therapist

## ★ REDEFINE “PROFESSIONALISM”

Professionalism is not about ignoring your needs; it is about staying functional and safe. A lot of us were taught to push through things and not make it visible. But with diabetes, that mindset can actually make things worse.

- Checking your CGM, eating something mid-task, or stepping away for a minute is not unprofessional; it is managing your health so you can perform at your best.
- You are not being “high-maintenance,” you are managing something that never turns off.

## ★ ADVOCATE BEFORE YOU NEED TO

Advocating early means you are not trying to explain yourself in the middle of a low. You do not have to tell everyone everything, but you do need to be safe.

- Consider picking one or two people you trust and let them know the basics, including your direct supervisor or hiring manager.
- You do not need to share your full medical history if you are not comfortable; this is simply about making sure someone can support you if something happens.
- Also, you are allowed to have what you need by law. Breaks, food, water, checking your levels... that is not extra; that is necessary. Learn more: [Accessible Canada Act](#)

## ★ PLAN FOR THE CRASH AFTER THE SHIFT

This is the one people tend to forget about. Getting through the shift is one thing, but taking care of yourself after matters just as much.

- Post-shift lows are really common, especially if you have been active or running on adrenaline all day.
- Your body is still recovering, even if you are just sitting or going to sleep.
- Things like a small snack, adjusting your insulin amounts, or checking your blood sugars before bed can help catch it before it becomes a problem.

## ★ GIVE YOURSELF GRACE

You are managing a lot at once, and the fact that you keep showing up already says a lot! Some days just won't make sense, and that is okay.

- You may do everything “right,” and your numbers will still be off, or your job may throw something unexpected at you and everything shifts.
- That does NOT mean you are doing a bad job; it just means your body is complex, and your environment may not always be predictable.



Check out the [Unique Careers with T1D Webinar](#) for more tips, available on DHF's YouTube Channel.

