



Assessing Products and Information- is it Suitable for You?

People with diabetes are bombarded with new products and information regarding diabetes. Some products and information are excellent and very useful. Other products and information are not.

People with diabetes need to be able to assess the products and information they are being bombarded with. There are some vital questions that you must ask to ensure that the product and information is right for you. Broadly we can assess products as one group and information as a second group

1. Products and Product Claims -

BE SCEPTICAL

Products may range from footwear, diet or food supplements, weight management programs, to equipment and beyond. Sometimes claims offer what seems like a magic bullet or a quick fix and sometimes they seem almost too good to be true. When you discover a product that appeals to you and your diabetes needs, there are some very important and basic questions you need to ask:

- Will someone be making a lot of money from this product?
- Are there less expensive options that are effective and safe?
- Is the claim using the “Here’s how it works!” strategy? Just because someone says this is how it works doesn’t necessarily mean that it is so – is the claim backed by evidence based research?
- Can the claim and evidenced based research quoted show that the product is effective and safe for you?

- Has the claim and evidence based research quoted been reproduced by other reputable sources?
- Are the claims blinding you with science? Just because it sounds scientific doesn’t mean that it is valid. Do not assume individuals or groups with vested interests will be unbiased.
- Are the claims using a personal testimony? This is called anecdotal evidence or reporting. It is someone providing possibly their personal experience and while it may be true for them is there the evidenced based research to show that it will be true for you?
- Is the claim being endorsed by a celebrity? Is the celebrity an expert in that field to give an endorsement of that product?

2. Information (e.g. new research, therapies, books, internet)

Often there are bulletins or ads that raise new hopes on treatments that may be in the very early stages of research. Early stages can often look very promising but the research may eventually show that it is not effective. When you hear or read about research, there are some very important and basic questions you need to ask:

- When and where was the information published?

- Is the information published in a diabetes specific publication? Is it the publication's field of expertise?
- Is it more than 5 years old, if so it is probably out of date? There may be more recent and therefore more relevant information.
- Who is the author? Are they qualified to offer an opinion on this subject? Just because someone has the title of doctor and a lot of letters after their name, does it mean they are qualified to comment on the subject? Are their qualifications relevant to diabetes?
- Rat Alert!!!! Has the research been verified in humans? Or is the research still at the laboratory stage? The results may be different for humans
- Does the research fit with national guidelines? The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMC) is Australia's national centre. Access the NHMRC on www.nhmrc.gov.au for information
- Are the health professionals or the researchers involved benefiting financially?
- Is the information anecdotal or based on an evidenced based scientific study? Anecdotal is where someone relates a personal experience such as "I found research A/product B worked best for me or my client"

REMEMBER THINK BEFORE YOU BUY OR TRY

If you are still not sure discuss with your team members, who include your family, GP, diabetes specialist, diabetes educator, pharmacist, and podiatrist.

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