

Tag, you are it!

Here's why to wear
a medical ID 24/7:
You're worth it.
Check out the details
and a sampling of
our favorites.

BY Hope S. Warshaw, R.D., CDE
PHOTOS BY Blaine Moats



Necklace (\$30),
The Beadin' Beagle;
561/737-8325;
beadin-beagle.com

Why identify?

"A medical ID can speak for you if you can't speak for yourself."

—Marcia D. Draheim,
R.N., CDE, PWD type 2

It's a scenario that many people with diabetes fear: being unable to help yourself because of high or low blood glucose. For example, a patient of Marcia D. Draheim, R.N., CDE, president-elect of the American Association of Diabetes Educators, became disoriented from low blood glucose while driving. Fortunately, a medical ID came to the rescue. "Once the highway patrol [pulled her over], they read 'diabetic' on her medical ID and immediately knew how to help her," Draheim says.

When to wear

The one day you choose not to wear an ID may be the very time you need it.

"The challenge for diabetes educators like me lies in motivating people to wear medical ID 24/7," Draheim says. Finding one that you like enough to wear every day is key. Many people dislike wearing their diabetes on their sleeve—or around their neck. Fashion-forward IDs may be more appealing to some, including Sheri Gouterman's 11-year-old son, T.J. "He refused to wear a traditional ID but was more than willing to wear a trendy bead necklace with the medical charm in the middle," Sheri says.

What to wear

"Simpler is better. If your ID looks too much like fancy jewelry, we may not recognize it as a medical ID."

—Bob Coulombe

Chappaqua Volunteer Ambulance Corps

Medical IDs now include temporary tattoos, beaded bracelets, and stretchy silicone wristbands. You can wear an ID around your neck or ankle, tied to the laces of a sneaker, or fastened to a jacket zipper. But before you let fashion sense overrule common sense, heed Chappaqua Volunteer Ambulance Corps member Bob Coulombe: Emergency responders need to see and recognize the ID as a warning symbol so they can treat you.

Continued on page 22 »

» Continued from page 20

How to say it

The most important details to put on your ID are your name, the word “diabetes,” and the phone number for a dependable contact person.

The essential information to put on your ID is brief: your full name, your medical condition(s), and at least one contact number. Several companies that sell medical IDs offer to put your information in a database that can be accessed by emergency personnel, but no studies are available to show the effectiveness of such databases. 📱



Hope Warsaw is a registered dietitian, certified diabetes educator, author, and *Diabetic Living* magazine contributing editor and advisory board member.

Before you buy an ID

When shopping for medical identification jewelry or tags, ask yourself these questions:

- ◆ Do I like it enough to wear it all day, every day?
- ◆ Will the medical ID be physically comfortable?
- ◆ Is it durable enough for my lifestyle and activities?
- ◆ Is the medical ID portion large enough to hold the key information—my name, the word “diabetes,” and reliable phone numbers for one or more contacts?
- ◆ Is the medical ID alert easy to locate on the tag and on my body?



- 1. Shoe tag** (set of two, \$16). Lifetag; 888/543-3824; lifetag.com
- 2. Necklace** (free/\$3 shipping). Diabetes Research & Wellness Foundation; diabeteswellness.net; write to Free Diabetes Necklace, 5151 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Suite 420, Washington, D.C., 20016
- 3. Leather money clip wallet ID** (\$24). Lifetag; 888/543-3824; lifetag.com
- 4. Cell phone charm** (\$17). The Beadin' Beagle; 561/737-8325; beadin-beagle.com
- 5. Bracelets.** For resources, see page 105.