



Vision Quests and Diabetes

The vision comes during isolation, but the understanding comes by going back to the community. It is this dual nature of the Vision Quest that has made it such a powerful ritual with Native Americans. A Vision Quest is where a person withdraws to an isolated area (often a hill) and fasts and prays for the spirits to give a dream or vision through which he or she can achieve a better life or a better life for his or her family and community. As a result, a Vision Quest can be a critical element in a person's ability to manage their diabetes. However a Vision Quest for a person with diabetes poses some medical challenges but with proper preparation they can participate. Most diabetic treatment plans are focused on utilizing food properly; it may take some effort to develop a plan for fasting.

It is important to control your blood sugar while fasting. Out of control blood sugar can affect your senses and hide any visions from the spirits.

These are some suggestions:

With your health care provider develop a treatment plan that can be used with fasting. Be patient, it may take several weeks before you will know how your body responds to fasting.

Drink plenty of water before starting the Quest. If you are going to do a sweat before or after a Quest, drink extra water to avoid dehydration.



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Drink plenty of water before starting the Quest. If you are going to do a sweat before or after a Quest, drink extra water to avoid dehydration.

Start by fasting for only one day and test your blood sugar several times. It is important to have experience with fasting before undertaking even a one-day Vision Quest.

Arrange to have one or two friends observe you unseen during your Quest. Arrange to go through a routine that will allow the observers to judge how you are feeling.

Longer fasts require more elaborate preparations and treatment plans. Remember to check your blood sugar often.

Finally, since diabetes dramatically increases the chances of you having a heart attack or stroke, make sure you know their warning signs and symptoms.

Talk with other people who have diabetes and have undertaken Vision Quests. Talk with the spiritual leaders. Your health care provider can help you contact leaders who have experience accommodating people with diabetes. They can help you avoid the potential problems and gain the benefits of one of the most profound experiences in Native American life.

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