

Managing Your Diabetes

Taking care of your diabetes is important to help you take care of your heart. You can lower your chances of having a heart attack or stroke by taking the following steps to manage your diabetes to keep your heart and blood vessels healthy.

Diabetes ABCs

Knowing your diabetes ABCs will help you manage your blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol. If you have diabetes, quitting tobacco use is also important to lower your chances for heart disease.

- **A is for the A1C test.** The A1C test shows your average blood glucose level over the past 3 months. This is different from the blood glucose checks that you do every day. The higher your A1C number, the higher your blood glucose levels have been during the past 3 months. High levels of blood glucose can harm your heart, blood vessels, kidneys, feet, and eyes.

The A1C goal for many people with diabetes is below 7 percent. Some people may do better with a slightly higher A1C goal. Ask your health care team what your goal should be.

- **B is for Blood Pressure.** Blood pressure is the force of your blood against the wall of your blood vessels. If your blood pressure gets too high, it makes your heart work too hard. High blood pressure can cause a heart attack or stroke and damage your kidneys and eyes.

The blood pressure goal for most people with diabetes is below 140/90 mm Hg. Ask what your goal should be.

- **C is for Cholesterol.** You have two kinds of cholesterol in your blood: LDL and HDL. LDL, or “bad” cholesterol, can build up and clog your blood vessels. Too much bad cholesterol can cause a heart attack or stroke. HDL, or “good” cholesterol, helps remove the “bad” cholesterol from your vessels.

Ask your health care team what your cholesterol numbers should be. If you are over 40 years of age, you may need to take medicine to lower your cholesterol and protect your heart. Some people with very high LDL (“bad”) cholesterol may need to take medicine at a younger age.

- **S is for Stop Smoking.** Not smoking is especially important for people with diabetes because both smoking and diabetes narrow blood vessels. Narrow vessels cause your heart to work harder. If you quit smoking:
 - You can reduce your risk for heart attack, stroke, nerve disease, kidney disease, eye disease, and amputation.
 - Your blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels may improve.
 - Your blood circulation may improve.
 - You may have an easier time being physically active.

If you smoke or use other tobacco products, don't stop trying to quit. Ask your health care professional for medications or resources that can help so you do not have to do it alone.



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Healthy lifestyle habits

Developing or maintaining healthy lifestyle habits can help you manage your diabetes and prevent heart disease. Some healthy lifestyle habits include:

- Following your healthy eating plan
- Making physical activity part of your routine
- Staying at or getting to a healthy weight
- Getting enough sleep

Learn to manage stress

Managing diabetes is not always easy. Feeling stressed, sad, or angry is common when you are living with diabetes. You may know what to do to stay healthy but may have trouble sticking with your plan over time. Long-term stress can raise your blood glucose and blood pressure, but you can learn ways to lower your stress. Try deep breathing, gardening, taking a walk, doing yoga, meditating, finding a hobby, or listening to your favorite music.

Take medicine to protect your heart

Medicines may be an important part of your treatment plan. Your doctor will prescribe medicine based on your specific needs. Medicine may help you:

- Meet your A1C (blood glucose), blood pressure, and cholesterol goals.
- Reduce your risk of blood clots, heart attack, or stroke.
- Treat angina, or chest pain, that is often a symptom of heart disease. Angina can also be an early symptom of a heart attack. Contact your doctor immediately or call 911 if you are experiencing new or worsening chest pain.

Talk with your doctor if you have questions about your medicines. Before you start a new medicine, ask your doctor about possible side effects and how you can avoid them. If the side effects of your medicine bother you, tell your doctor. Do not stop taking your medicines without checking with your doctor first. Always take medicines as prescribed.

Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

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