

Controlling Diabetes



Diabetes is a serious disease. It affects almost every part of the body. But you can help control your diabetes. There are four key steps that you can take.

Step 1: Learn about diabetes

Diabetes means that your blood glucose (blood sugar) is too high. There are two main types of diabetes:

Type 1 diabetes. The body does not make insulin. Insulin helps the body use glucose from food for energy. People with type 1 need to take insulin every day.

Type 2 diabetes. The body does not make or use insulin well. People with type 2 often need to take pills or insulin. Type 2 is the most common form of diabetes.

All people with diabetes need to eat healthy, stay at a healthy weight and be active every day.

Taking good care of diabetes will help you feel better and avoid the health problems diabetes can cause, such as:

- Heart disease and stroke
- Nerve damage
- Gum disease and loss of teeth
- Eye disease
- Kidney problems

Step 2: Control your blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol

Manage your A1c (blood glucose test), blood pressure and cholesterol. This will help lower your chances of having a heart attack, stroke or other diabetes problems.

- **A1c test.** It shows how well your blood glucose has been controlled over the last three months. It should be checked at least twice a year. The goal for most people is less than seven percent.
- **Blood pressure.** High blood pressure makes your heart work too hard. It can cause heart attack, stroke and kidney disease. The goal for most people is 130/80.
- **Cholesterol.** Bad cholesterol, or LDL, can build up and clog your blood vessels. It can cause a heart attack or a stroke. The LDL goal for most people is less than 100.

Ask your health care team about what your goals should be.

Step 3: Manage your diabetes

Many people avoid the long-term problems of diabetes by taking good care of themselves.

- Follow your diabetes meal plan.
- Eat the right portions of healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables, fish, lean meats, dry beans, whole grains, and low-fat or skim milk and cheese.
- Eat foods that have less salt and fat.
- Get 30 to 60 minutes of activity on most days of the week.
- Stay at a healthy weight by being active and eating the right amounts of healthy foods.
- Stop smoking – seek help to quit.
- Take medicines the way your doctor tells you.
- Check your feet every day for cuts, blisters, red spots and swelling.
- Brush your teeth and floss every day to avoid problems with your mouth, teeth or gums.
- Check your blood glucose the way your doctor tells you to.

Step 4: Get routine care

See your health care team for regular care.

At each visit get:

- Blood pressure check (if it's over 130/80, ask what steps to take to help you lower your blood pressure)
- Weight check
- Foot check

Two times a year get:

- A1c check (check more often if it's over seven percent)
- Dental exams to prevent gum disease and loss of teeth. Tell your dentist you have diabetes.

Once each year get:

- Cholesterol check (if LDL is over 100, ask what steps to take to reach your goal)
- Dilated eye exam to check for eye problems
- Urine and blood tests to check for kidney problems
- Flu shot

Cultural Understanding – Dedication – Commitment

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Source: National Diabetes Education Program, 4 Steps to Control Your Diabetes for Life, National Institutes of Health, NIH Publication No. 04-5492, December 2003.

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