

Tips to Help You Stay Healthy with Diabetes

Follow these four steps to help you manage your diabetes and live a long and active life.

Step 1: Learn about diabetes

What is diabetes?

There are three main types of diabetes:

- **Type 1 diabetes** – Your body does not make insulin to take the sugar (glucose) from the foods you eat and turn it into energy for your body. If you have type 1 diabetes, you need to take insulin every day to live.
- **Type 2 diabetes** – Your body does not make or use insulin well. You might need to take pills or insulin to help control your diabetes. Type 2 is the most common type of diabetes.
- **Gestational (jest-TAY-shun-al) diabetes** – Some women get this kind of diabetes when they are pregnant. Most of the time it goes away after the baby is born. But even if it goes away, these women and their children have a greater chance of getting diabetes later in life.

Why is diabetes serious?

Diabetes can cause health problems such as heart attack or stroke, eye problems, nerve damage, kidney problems, and teeth and gum problems. People with diabetes need to make healthy food choices, stay at a healthy weight, move more every day, and take their medicines even when they feel good. It is a lot to do. It's not easy, but it's worth it.

Step 2: Know your diabetes ABCs

Talk to your health care team about how to manage your **A1C**, **B**lood pressure and **C**holesterol. This can help lower your chance of having a heart attack, stroke, or other diabetes problems.

A for the A1C test: (A-one-C).

- A1C is a blood test that measures your average blood sugar level over the past three months. It is different from the blood sugar checks you might do each day.
- The A1C goal for many people with diabetes is **below 7**. Ask your health care team what your goal should be.

B for Blood pressure.

- Blood pressure is the force of blood against the wall of your blood vessels. If your blood pressure gets too high, it makes your heart work too hard.
- Your blood pressure goal should be below 140/80 unless your doctor helps you set a different goal.

C for Cholesterol (ko-LESS-tuh-ruhl).

- There are two kinds of cholesterol in your blood: LDL and HDL. LDL or “bad” cholesterol can build up and clog your blood vessels. HDL or “good” cholesterol helps remove the “bad” cholesterol from your blood vessels.
- Ask your health care team what your cholesterol numbers should be, and if they are not where they should be, ask what you can do about it.



National Diabetes Education Program

A program of the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Step 3: Learn how to live well with diabetes

Cope well with your diabetes.

- Stress can raise your blood sugar. Learn ways to lower stress. Try deep breathing, gardening, taking a walk, meditating, working on your hobby, or listening to your favorite music.
- Ask for help if you feel down. A mental health counselor, support group, member of the clergy, friend, or family member who will listen to your concerns might help you feel better.

Eat well.

- Make a diabetes meal plan with help from your health care team.
- Choose foods lower in calories, saturated fat, trans fat, sugar, and salt.
- Eat foods with more fiber, such as whole grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice, or pasta.
- Choose foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat or skim milk, and cheese.
- Drink water instead of juice and regular soda.
- When eating a meal, fill half of your plate with fruits and vegetables, one-quarter with a lean protein, such as beans, chicken, or turkey without skin, and one-quarter with a whole grain.
- Be physically active.
- Set a goal to be physically active for 30 minutes most days of the week. Start slow by taking 10 minute walks, 3 times a day.
- Twice a week, work to increase your muscle strength. Use stretch bands, do yoga, or heavy gardening (digging and planting with tools).
- Stay at healthy weight by using your meal plan and moving more. Talk with your health care team about what a healthy weight means for you.

Know what to do every day.

- Take your medicines even when you feel good. Tell your doctor if you cannot afford your medicine or if you experience any side effects.
- Check your feet every day for cuts, blisters, red spots, and swelling. Call your health care team right away about any sores.
- Brush your teeth and floss every day to keep your mouth, teeth, and gums healthy.
- Keep track of your blood sugar and keep a record of your numbers if your health care provider says this is appropriate. Check with your health care team on how often and when to check your blood sugar.
- Check your blood pressure if your doctor advises and keep a record of it.
- Don't smoke. Ask for help to quit. Call 1-800-QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669).

Step 4: Get routine care to stay healthy

- See your health care team at least twice a year to find and treat any problems early.
- Follow the schedule of tests and checks listed on the Diabetes Care Record on the next page.
- If you have Medicare, check to see how your plan covers diabetes care.

My Diabetes Care Record and Action Plan:

Write down the dates and results of all tests and check-ups.

Take this record to your health care visits.

A1C - At least twice each year				My goal: _____
Date				
Result				
Blood Pressure (BP) - At each visit				My goal: _____
Date				
Result				
Cholesterol - Once each year				My goal: _____
Date				
Result				

Each Visit	Date	Result
Foot check		
Review self-care plan		
Weight check		
Review medicines		
Once a Year	Date	Result
Dental exam		
Dilated eye exam		
Complete foot exam		
Flu shot		
Kidney check		
At Least Once	Date	Result
Pneumonia shot		
Hepatitis B shot		

Three reasons to manage my diabetes:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
Three things I will work on over the next three months to reach my goals:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
The people who can help me manage my diabetes and reach my goals:

