

# Knowing Your ABCs


## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW


Diabetes increases a person's chance of developing certain conditions that can put their life at risk, but controlling the ABCs (**A1C, blood pressure, cholesterol, and smoking cessation**) can prevent serious complications of diabetes. The goal of this session is to help participants understand how to use the ABCs to track progress in these three areas, providing important steps they can take to lower their chances for heart disease and stroke, and helping them set goals to improve their health.

### By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Name each of the ABCs for diabetes management.
- State their target goals for A1C, blood pressure, cholesterol, and smoking cessation if they smoke (or how they are going to determine them).
- Name three behaviors they want to change to manage their ABCs.
- Name at least two factors for successful goal setting.

## MODULE 2

 **DISCUSSION TIME**  
45-60 minutes

-  **OUTLINE**
1. Diabetes and heart disease
  2. The ABCs of diabetes
  3. Managing your ABCs
  4. Barriers to changing behavior
  5. Goal setting discussion

## ☆ KEY MESSAGES

1. Diabetes increases risk of heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. The number one cause of death among people with diabetes is heart disease.

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2. Remembering the ABCs can help participants track and take steps to improve these levels to lower their risk of heart disease and stroke.

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3. People with diabetes can work with their health care team to set goals that are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely, and trackable). These goals can then be reevaluated and changed as needed.

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## 🔗 CONNECTING THREADS

Connecting Threads are topics that can be incorporated into *New Beginnings* sessions depending on the goals and needs of your participants.

Recommended Connecting Threads:

- [Facilitating \*New Beginnings\* Online](#)
- [Commit to Quit: Stopping Smoking](#)
- [Understanding Health Information](#)

## 🖱️ GOING VIRTUAL TIPS

- The content on the [Making a Plan Worksheet](#) can be shared as a Microsoft Word document or Google Doc before or after the session. This way group members can fill it in online without having to print it.
- Instead of pairing off participants in the activities, use the breakout room feature of your video teleconferencing platform (if available) or go around the “room” and have each participant share with the whole group. See the [Connecting Thread: Facilitating \*New Beginnings\* Online](#) for ideas on how to adjust activities for virtual groups.
- The video stories for this module can be played by sharing your screen (and computer audio) through your video teleconferencing platform. Another option is to share the links to the videos with your group members by email before the session starts.
- The audio stories can be inserted into the [New Beginnings PowerPoint template](#) along with images that reflect the story.

## MATERIALS

Suggested stories for this module:

- [Yvonne's Story B](#): Yvonne talks about the challenges she faces in trying to make healthy food choices. (Audio: about 3 minutes)
- [Healthy Eating with Diabetes](#): (Video: about 5 minutes)
- [Physical Activity: Practical Tips and Action Steps](#): (Video: about 3 minutes)
- [Setting Goals to Improve Your Health](#): Experts share tips for setting achievable goals to manage diabetes. (Video: about 3 minutes)

Handouts:

- [Steps to Help You Stay Healthy With Diabetes](#)
- [Making a Plan Worksheet](#)

# Group Discussion

This discussion will focus on understanding the ABCs of diabetes, how they link to heart disease, and how to set goals for behavior change that will help you get to the target numbers for your ABCs.

## Diabetes and Heart Disease

### GROUP LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

### TALKING POINTS AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



**ASK:**

What do you know about the link between diabetes and heart disease?



**SAY:**

Adults with diabetes are at increased risk of heart disease, heart attack and stroke. Over time, high blood sugar levels can damage the nerves and blood vessels in your body.

People with diabetes may also have other risk factors for heart disease like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, and a family history of heart disease. Smoking significantly increases the risk of heart disease in people with diabetes.

In our last session, we wrote down the names of some people in our support circle. Those may have included partners, family members, close friends, and other loved ones. Think about your list, now add anyone else in your life who might depend on you for love and support.

**ASK:**

Maybe you have additional family, children, or grandchildren. What would happen if you had a heart attack or stroke? Think about how it would affect your life and the lives of your loved ones.

The number one cause of death in people with diabetes is heart disease. None of us want to think about that possibility, but you're here because you want to get better at managing your diabetes, and that includes learning how to lower your risk of heart disease.

## The ABCs of Diabetes

**ASK:**

Give each participant a copy of the handout, [Steps to Help You Stay Healthy With Diabetes](#).

Let's look at this handout together. What are the ABCs of diabetes?

**SAY:**

As we discussed last week, the ABCs of diabetes is a memory tool that can help you track and manage three important measurements. Knowing your numbers and taking steps to reach your goals can lower your chances of having a heart attack or stroke.

- **A is for A1C.** It is a blood test that measures your average blood sugar level over the past 3 months. It is different from the blood sugar checks you might do each day. The goal for many people with diabetes is an A1C that is below 7.0%, but ask your doctor what your A1C goal is.
- **B is for Blood Pressure.** High blood pressure makes your heart work too hard. The goal blood pressure for most people with diabetes is below 140/90. Your health care provider can give you a goal that works best for you.
- **C is for Cholesterol.** When cholesterol levels are too high, blood vessels can fill up with a sticky substance called plaque. This plaque buildup makes it harder for blood to pass through and increases risk of heart disease. Ask your health care provider what your cholesterol number should be. If you are older than 40, your health care provider may prescribe a statin (a medicine that lowers cholesterol) for heart health.

The "s" in ABCs is for stopping smoking. People with diabetes should not smoke or use tobacco products because it puts them at even higher risk of heart disease and other complications.



**ASK:**

- Have you ever talked with your doctor about your A1C, blood pressure, or cholesterol levels?
- Do you already have goals for these numbers?
- Do you know what your current numbers are and how they compare to your goals?

The ABC goal values mentioned are for most people with diabetes, but not everyone. If you have talked to your health care provider and you know what your goals are, write them down on the tracking form included in the handout.

If you do not have specific goals yet, take this form with you the next time you visit your health care provider. Discuss and write down your goals together. At every future visit go over how you are doing and write down your numbers to help you keep track.

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## Managing Your ABCs



**ASK:**

*Review tips on the [Steps to Help You Stay Healthy With Diabetes](#) handout.*

What actions can you take to manage your ABCs and reach your target numbers?

People with diabetes can take these actions to keep their A1C, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels within healthy ranges:

- Eat healthy foods, like fruit, vegetables, beans, whole grains, and food with less salt and fat.
  - Be moderately active about 150 minutes each week. Examples include walking, taking the stairs instead of the elevator, or swimming.
  - Not smoke.
  - Take medicines as prescribed by their health care provider.
  - Do things to lower stress, such as deep breathing, yoga, or gardening.
  - Ask their support circle for help.
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**WATCH:**

*Choose one or watch both*

- [Healthy Eating with Diabetes](#) (Video: about 5 minutes)
- [Physical Activity: Practical Tips and Action Steps](#) (Video: about 3 minutes)

**ACTIVITY:**

Think-Pair-Share:

Last week we talked a lot about small steps we can take toward success. I'd like you to pair up with a partner and talk about how you did on your assignment to take a small step toward successful diabetes management.

Tell your partner what small steps you took this week to manage your ABCs. If you faced challenges in completing any steps this week, that's okay. Talk about at least one small success that you did have.

Now that we've looked more closely at things you can do to manage your ABCs, write down one or two more things you want to do differently in your daily life. Think about your own life and actions. We all have unique lifestyles and challenges, so one person's steps toward success will likely be different from another's. Talk about your list with your partner.

## Barriers to Changing a Behavior

**SAY:**

Let's listen to someone with diabetes who is working to manage her ABCs. As you listen, make a note of the behaviors she is trying to work on, and what might make them difficult.

**LISTEN:**

[Yvonne's Story B](#): (Audio: about 3 minutes)

**ASK:**

- What steps did Yvonne discuss taking to manage her ABCs?
- What makes it difficult for her to take these steps?
- What strategies does she use?
- What, if anything, did you learn about the strategies the character tried that might help you?

## Barriers to Changing a Behavior

### GROUP LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

### TALKING POINTS AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



**SAY:**

Changing a behavior that is a major part of your daily life can be very challenging. Sometimes, it's difficult to get started, and once you do, it can be hard to stick with it.



**ACTIVITY:**

Join your partner again and look at the list of changes you want to make to manage your ABCs.

Share with your partner what is challenging about getting started with each item on your list. Brainstorm some ideas about what might help you get started and to stay motivated. Being prepared for the potential challenges and roadblocks that might keep us from reaching our goals can help us stay on track and avoid detours.

## Goal Setting

### GROUP LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

### TALKING POINTS AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



**SAY:**

When it comes to changing our behaviors, everyone is different. We have our own reasons for wanting to change and different challenges that get in the way. But we are all capable of making changes.

Setting a goal, making a plan, and keeping track of how you're doing will increase your chances of making important behavior changes.

Knowing that challenges will always come up and having ideas in mind for how you can overcome them can help you become more resilient (quicker to recover) in your efforts to reach your goals.

Remember that you're in charge of your own goals. Not all changes can or should be made at once, and even small steps can have big rewards.



**WATCH:**

[Setting Goals to Improve Your Health](#) (Video: about 3 minutes)



**ASK:**

What are some key messages from the video?



**SAY:**

Let's look at this handout: [Making a Plan Worksheet](#).

- Set meaningful goals. Figure out what will motivate you.
- Break goals down into manageable steps.
- Set SMART goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely, and trackable.
- There is no such thing as failure. Reevaluate your goals and keep trying.

Take the handout and choose one of the actions or behaviors you would like to focus on for managing your ABCs. Do the [Making a Plan Worksheet](#) for this behavior.



**ASK:**

Would anyone like to share your plan with the rest of the group?

*Applaud each person who shares. Be careful about allowing participants to comment on the plans of others unless the person specifically asks for advice from the group. The goal is to encourage people to identify ways to solve their own problems. Unsolicited advice can make people feel less empowered.*



## CLOSE THE SESSION

- Take final questions.
- Thank the group for their participation.
- Explain the at-home activity, if applicable.
- Remind participants about the next session. Ask if they have specific questions or issues they would like addressed.
- Ask participants to do the session evaluation.



### AT-HOME ACTIVITY

If you did not conduct a goal setting activity, ask participants to review the materials and set a goal for taking one of the actions to improve their ABCs. The following handouts for this session include goal setting worksheets:

- [Steps to Help You Stay Healthy With Diabetes](#)
- [Making a Plan Worksheet](#)

## RESOURCES

Use these resources to learn more about the ABCs of diabetes, expand the discussion, or provide additional resources to participants.

### **Making Healthy Food Choices**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- [Diabetes Kickstart](#)
- [Buffet Tips for People With Diabetes](#)
- [Tasty Recipes for People With Diabetes and Their Families](#)

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

- [Healthy Living with Diabetes](#)

US Department of Agriculture: [Eat Right When Money's Tight](#)

### **Physical Activity**

US Department of Health and Human Services: [Move Your Way](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- [Physical Activity Basics](#)
- [Adding Physical Activity as an Adult](#)