ENGLISH

Taking Care of Your Diabetes Means Taking Care of Your Heart

Diabetes and Heart Disease

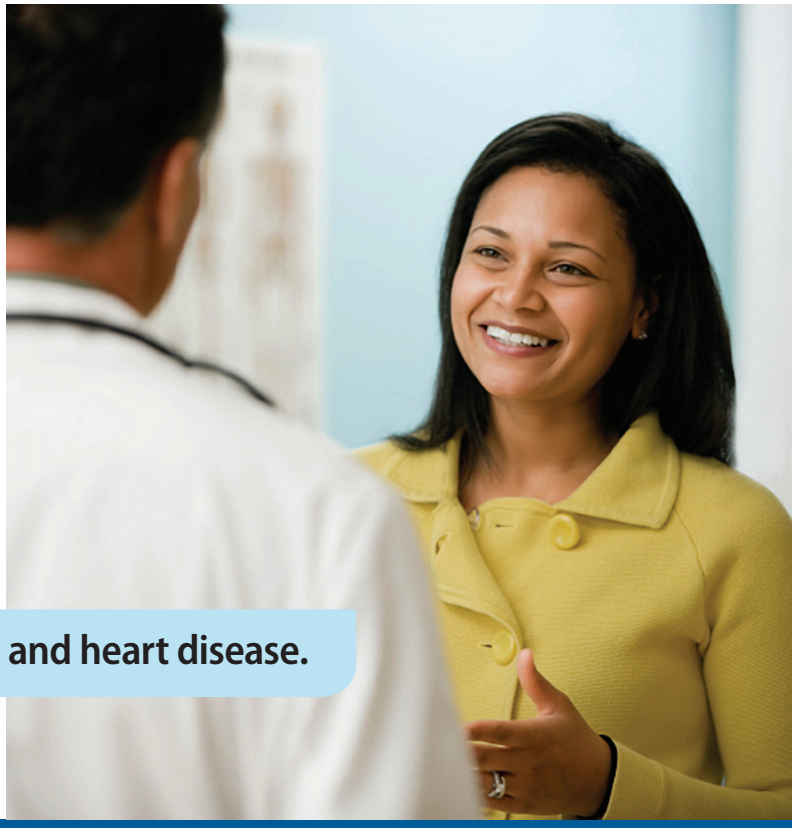
For people with diabetes, heart disease can be a serious health problem. Many people don't know that having diabetes means that you have a greater chance of having heart problems such as a heart attack or stroke. Taking care of your diabetes can also help you take care of your heart. Use the tools in this tip sheet to help. They are:

- A list of things you can do such as eating healthy foods and getting more active.
- A form to write down and track your A1C, blood pressure, and cholesterol numbers.

What you can do now

Ask your health care team these questions:

- What can I do to lower my chances of getting heart disease?
- What should my goals be for A1C, blood pressure, and cholesterol?
- What can I do to reach these goals?
- Should I take medicine that can protect my heart such as aspirin or a statin?



Ask any questions you have about diabetes and heart disease.

NDEP National Diabetes Education Program

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

Make healthy food choices.

Share concerns with friends.

Eat well.

- Eat foods that are high in fiber such as whole grain breads and cereals, brown rice, lentils, beans, fruits, and vegetables.
- Eat foods with heart-healthy fats such as fish, nuts, seeds, and avocado.
- Eat foods low in saturated and *trans* fats such as lean meat, chicken without the skin, fish, and non-fat or low-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese.
- Use oils when cooking food instead of butter, cream, shortening, lard, or stick margarine.
- Limit desserts such as cookies and ice cream to only 1 or 2 times a week.
- Eat smaller amounts of foods that are high in fat, sugar, or salt. For example, if you want french fries, order the kid-sized portion.
- Bake, broil, or grill food instead of frying.
- Do not add salt to food.

Stop smoking.

- Ask for help or call 1-800-784-8669 (1-800-QUIT-NOW).

Be active.

- Be active for 30 minutes or more each day. It's okay to be active for 10 minutes at a time, 3 times a day.
- Walk, dance, swim, or ride a bike.

Take your medicine.

- Take medicines the way your doctor or health care team tells you to.
- Do not stop taking your medicines until you talk to your doctor.
- Ask your pharmacist or doctor any questions you have about your medicines.

Cope with stress as best you can.

- Ask for help if you feel down. Talk to a mental health counselor, member of the clergy, friend, or family member who will listen to your concerns.
- Tell your family members and friends how they can best help and support you.

Here's one more way to take care of your heart: Learn the warning signs of a heart attack and stroke.

- Signs of a heart attack may include pressure, squeezing, fullness, and pain in the chest or upper body. You may also have shortness of breath.
- The signs of a heart attack for a woman may be different than a man. Signs for a woman can include nausea and vomiting, being tired all the time (sometimes for days), and pain in the back, shoulders, and jaw.
- Signs of a stroke may include weakness on one side and trouble walking, seeing, or speaking.

Call 9-1-1 right away if you think you are having a heart attack or stroke. Acting fast can save your life.

Your Diabetes Record Form

Use this form to keep track of your A1C, blood pressure, and cholesterol numbers. These terms are explained below the Diabetes Record Form.

- Write down the date and results for each test or blood pressure check you get.
- Take this form with you on your health care visits. Show it to your health care team.
- Talk about your goals and how you are doing.

Diabetes Record Form

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					

A1C test (A-one-C)

What is it?

The A1C is a blood test that measures your average blood sugar (glucose) level over the past three months. It is different from the blood sugar checks you do each day.

Why is it important?

You need to know your blood sugar levels over time. You don't want those numbers to get too high. High levels of blood sugar can harm your heart, blood vessels, kidneys, feet, and eyes.

What is the A1C goal?

The A1C goal for many people with diabetes is below 7. It may be different if you are an older adult (over 65), have had diabetes for a long time, or your blood sugar often gets too low. Ask what your goal should be.

Blood Pressure

What is it?

Blood pressure is the force of your blood against the walls of your blood vessels.

Why is it important?

If your blood pressure gets too high, it makes your heart work too hard. It can cause a heart attack, stroke, and damage your kidneys and eyes.

What is the blood pressure goal?

The blood pressure goal for most people with diabetes is below 140/90. It may be different for you. Ask what your goal should be.

Cholesterol

What is it?

There are two kinds of cholesterol in your blood: LDL and HDL.

Why is it important?

LDL or "bad" cholesterol can build up and clog your blood vessels. It can cause a heart attack or stroke. HDL or "good" cholesterol helps remove the "bad" cholesterol from your blood vessels.

What are the LDL and HDL goals?

These goals are different for different people. Ask what your cholesterol numbers should be. If you are over 40 years of age, you may need to take medicine such as a statin to lower your cholesterol and protect your heart.

Things to Remember

- Heart disease can be a serious health problem for people with diabetes.
- Taking care of your diabetes means you have less chance of having a heart attack or stroke.
- Talk to your health care team and ask questions about how best to take care of your heart.
- Eat well, be active, learn how to cope with stress, and take your medicine.
- Stop smoking. Ask for help or call 1-800-784-8669 (1-800-QUIT-NOW).
- Learn the warning signs of a heart attack and stroke.
- Use your diabetes care record to write down your A1C, blood pressure, and cholesterol numbers.

To learn more:

National Diabetes Education Program

1-800-860-8747
TTY: 1-866-569-1162
www.ndep.nih.gov

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

1-800-860-8747
www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

NHLBI Health Information Center
1-301–592–8573
TTY: 240–629–3255
www.nhlbi.nih.gov

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

Know Stroke Campaign
1-800-352-9424
www.stroke.nih.gov

www.ndep.nih.gov

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