

Reducing Risks

Having diabetes puts you at a higher risk for developing other health problems. However, if you understand the risks, you can take steps now to lower your chance of diabetes-related complications.

Talk to your diabetes educator and healthcare provider about potential health issues such as kidney damage, nerve damage and vision loss. They can explain why complications happen and how they can be avoided.

But don't rely on your healthcare team to identify areas of concern—you need to play an active role in reducing your risk. Make an effort to learn about complications and consistently track your overall health. You can reduce your risks for several complications by taking these precautions:

- Don't smoke.
- Schedule regular medical checkups and medical tests.
- See an eye doctor at least once a year.
- Keep your feet dry and clean. Look out for redness or sores, and report these to your healthcare team as soon as you find them. If you have trouble seeing the bottom of your feet, ask a family member or friend to help you.
- Be sensitive to your body—recognize when you aren't feeling well, and contact your care team if you need help identifying the problem.

Did You Know?

Lowering your cholesterol can decrease your risk for stroke, heart attack or other circulation problems.

True or False?

Controlling your diabetes can help reduce your risk for heart disease.

True. If your blood sugar or blood pressure levels are too high for too long, your blood vessels can become sticky. This makes it easier for blood clots to form...which can lead to a heart attack or stroke.

Good Words to Know

BLOOD PRESSURE:

The amount of pressure that is applied to your arteries when blood is pumped through your body

CHOLESTEROL:

A waxy substance that is in your blood that exists in two types: LDL ("bad") and HDL ("good")

COMPLICATION:

Another health problem that can happen when you have diabetes

HYPERTENSION:

When your blood pressure is higher than 140/90

United States Department of Agriculture, University of Arkansas, and County Governments Cooperating

The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

Quick Tips

Keep a Personal Care Record or a wallet card that lists all of the tests you should be regularly getting and the targets for each.

Sleep apnea affects more than half of people with diabetes and most don't know it. If you snore loudly or feel sluggish and tired during the day, ask your diabetes educator to screen you for sleep apnea.

Here are some things you can do to keep healthy and prevent other health problems:

FOLLOW YOUR HEALTHY EATING PLAN.

Are you proud of the way you ate today? _____

KEEP ACTIVE

What is your favorite outdoor activity? _____

TAKE MEDICATIONS

Did you take your meds today? _____

MONITOR YOUR BLOOD SUGAR

What was your blood sugar number last time you checked? _____

CHECK YOUR FEET

Any pain or sores on your feet? _____

BRUSH AND FLOSS YOUR TEETH

When was your last dentist visit? _____

CHECK YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

Do you know what your blood pressure is? _____

DON'T SMOKE

What can help you quit? _____

GET AN EYE EXAM (WHICH INCLUDES DILATING YOUR EYES) AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR

Have you had an eye exam this year? _____

Recommended Test	Target Levels	Frequency
A1C	Less than 7%	Every 3 to 6 months
Blood Pressure	Less than 140/80	Every visit
Lipids -HDL (good cholesterol) -LDL (bad cholesterol) -Triglycerides	Over 40 (for men); Over 50 (for women) Less than 100 (less than 70 if you have heart disease) Less than 150	At least every year
Eye Exam		Every year
Foot Exam (visual)		Every visit to your health care provider
Foot Exam (with sensory testing)		Every year

Adapted from material originally prepared by the American Association of Diabetes Educators