

Must Know Health Info

Health Information from the Experts at Johns Hopkins Medicine



Nine Ways to Avoid Diabetes Complications

Managing your diabetes means more than just getting blood sugar in control; it doesn't stop there. Follow these tips. They will help you reduce your chances of long term problems from diabetes. They will also help you improve your overall health.

1. **Control your blood glucose.** Keep your blood sugars within a healthy range. This is the best way to prevent long term problems from diabetes. Here is what the ADA (American Diabetes Association) recommends. Have an A-1-c test ("hemoglobin A1c") at least twice a year. If your A1c is under 7%, that is good control. Your blood sugars:

- should be in the in the 90-130 mg/dL range
- should be less than 180 mg/dL after you eat.

Keep a record of your blood sugar levels. Share it with your doctor or other health care team members. Work out a care plan for good blood sugar control.

2. **Eat healthy.** Follow a food plan that includes all food groups:
 - Vegetables
 - Fruits
 - Dairy
 - Protein
 - Whole grains.

This is the best way to eat for health. Limit foods that are high in bad fats ("saturated fat") and cholesterol. Drink plenty water and other drinks that do not have sugar.

3. **Be sure to be active every day.** When you exercise on a routine basis, it pays off; it can help you control your blood sugar with less medicine.

4. **Control your blood pressure.** High blood pressure makes you more prone to heart and kidney disease, and stroke. Exercise, lose weight, and eat a low salt diet. Doing these will help you control your blood pressure. And, these may reduce your need for blood pressure medicine.
5. **Be sure to keep your cholesterol low.** High blood cholesterol makes you more prone to heart disease and stroke. If you have diabetes, keep your LDL ("bad" cholesterol) low; it should be less than 100 mg/dL. Ask your doctor about the best methods for meeting this goal.
6. **Check your feet every day.** Diabetes can damage nerves and cause pain or loss of feeling. Often this happens in the legs and feet (called "peripheral neuropathy"). This can increase the risk of foot infections. Your doctor should examine your feet for early signs. Wear well-fitting shoes and always wear socks. Check your feet every day. See your doctor for signs of infection, a cut, or sore on your foot that doesn't heal.
7. **Know the signs of heart disease.** If you have diabetes, you may have common signs of heart disease. These include chest pain or shortness of breath. But, you may also have signs that are not common: pain in the jaw, shoulder, or abdomen; pain down the arm; nausea and dizziness.
8. **See your eye doctor yearly.** Diabetes can damage the small blood vessels in the eye ("retinopathy"). Often, the first symptom you will notice is poor vision. And, it even leads to blindness. An eye doctor ("ophthalmologist") can find problems early. This doctor can examine the back of the eye. This will detect signs of damage before your sight is impaired.
9. **Quit smoking now!** If you smoke, you are more prone to heart and kidney disease, stroke, and nerve damage. So, if you do smoke, quit. It's one of the most vital things you can do to prevent these diseases.