

TAKING CARE OF YOUR DIABETES

If you have diabetes, follow these action steps for treatment. The possible complications from diabetes can be extremely serious and cause damage to vital organs. Many of these complications can be delayed or prevented by carefully controlling blood glucose, blood pressure, and LDL cholesterol levels. To help you manage your diabetes you should discuss, create and follow a diabetes management plan with your healthcare provider and set goals for a treatment plan. Here are some specific suggestions to follow:

Check those action steps you need to do to take charge of your diabetes:

Work with Your Health Care Provider

- Ask your healthcare provider about the ABCs of diabetes. "A" is for A1C, a measure of average blood glucose; "B" is blood pressure; and "C" is LDL-cholesterol. You should find out what your levels are, what they should be, and what steps you can take to reach these goals.
- Work with your healthcare provider to establish and maintain individualized target blood glucose levels. Ask how often and when to measure your blood glucose levels. Ask how often and when to measure blood glucose levels. You should keep a record of blood glucose readings to show your healthcare provider so he/she can better assist you in regulating your blood glucose.
- Seek the help of qualified healthcare professionals - such as a primary care provider, an endocrinologist, a certified diabetes educator or a registered dietitian - to help with diabetes management.

Know Diabetes Symptoms

- Be aware of the symptoms of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) and hyperglycemia (high blood sugar). If you experience these symptoms, you should adjust your treatment plan and seek advice from your healthcare provider on how to maintain healthy blood glucose levels.
 - Know the symptoms of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar)
 - Feel weak, confused, irritable, hungry or tired
 - Sweat a lot or get a headache
 - Feel shaky
 - Know the symptoms of hyperglycemia (high blood sugar)
 - Feel very thirsty and tired
 - Have blurry vision
 - Have to go to the bathroom often
 - Nausea

Take Care of Your Eyes, Feet and Teeth

- You should ask your primary care provider about a dilated eye exam at least once a year as people with diabetes are at higher risk for vision problems and blindness. Early detection and treatment of diabetic eye disease can prevent or delay vision loss.
- Brush your teeth regularly and visit a dentist at least once every six months because people with diabetes are at higher risk for gum disease.

- Check your feet for sores and calluses every day, wear shoes that fit properly, and get a comprehensive foot exams at least once per year with your healthcare provider since people with diabetes are at a higher risk for foot problems that can be caused by neuropathy (nerve damage) or poor blood flow to the feet.

Protect Your Heart

- Request regular blood pressure checks at every medical visit and cholesterol checks at least once per year because people with diabetes are at higher risk for heart disease and stroke. Lowering blood pressure and cholesterol can reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke, the major cause of death in people with diabetes.
- If you smoke cigarettes, seek help from your healthcare provider to quit smoking to further reduce your risk for heart disease.

Protect Your Kidneys

- Ask for a urine test by your healthcare provider at least once a year to monitor the level of protein in urine -- a measure of kidney function.

Keep a Record of Your Medical Visits & Diabetes Self-Care Activities

The checklist below can help you and your healthcare provider keep track of diabetes care. Other materials for managing diabetes can be found at

<http://www.ndep.nih.gov/diabetes/control/control.htm> or by calling 1-800-860-8747.

Daily diabetes care activities

- Exercise
- Follow meal plan
- Take diabetes medicine
- Check blood glucose as recommended by healthcare provider
- Check feet for sores that are not healing properly
- Brush teeth and floss

At doctor visits

- Get feet checked
- Check blood pressure

At least twice per year

- Get an HbA1 test
- Get a dental check-up and have teeth cleaned by a dental professional

At least once per year

- Get a dilated eye exam
- Get a complete foot exam - checking circulation and for changes in foot shape

- Get a urine test for kidney function
- Get a flu shot
- Get blood lipid levels (cholesterol) checked

Learn Diabetes Self-Care - Diet, Exercise, Medications

- Follow a meal plan developed with your healthcare provider. This can be an important step for maintaining desirable blood glucose levels and avoiding complications.
- Work with your healthcare provider to develop an exercise program and follow this plan. Exercise is important for people with diabetes because it can help insulin work better to lower blood glucose levels and improve cardiovascular health.
- Follow your healthcare provider's recommendations for how and when to take diabetes medications. Share with your healthcare provider if these medications do not seem to be working properly.
- Ask your healthcare provider about new medicines and medical devices, such as blood glucose meters and insulin pens and pumps that could help manage diabetes.