

Stay Healthy with Diabetes

Long-standing high blood sugar levels can damage nerves, blood vessels, and organs in the body. These organs and nerves can be affected without you knowing. Keeping your blood sugars, blood pressure and cholesterol levels in a healthy range will help to prevent this damage.

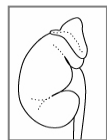
How is the body affected?

Eyes



High blood sugars can damage the small blood vessels in the eyes. Damage to blood vessels in the retina (back of the eye) is called retinopathy. Diabetes also raises the risk of cataracts and glaucoma. These problems can cause vision loss and lead to blindness.

Kidneys



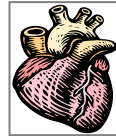
High blood sugar can damage the small blood vessels in the kidneys. The kidneys start to leak very small proteins called microalbumin. Kidney disease is called nephropathy. It can lead to kidney failure and dialysis.

Nerves



Neuropathy is damage to the nerves from high blood sugar. It can cause pain, numbness and tingling, loss of feeling, and muscle weakness in the hands, legs, and feet. Nerves in the heart, bladder, digestive system, and sexual organs can be affected as well.

Heart

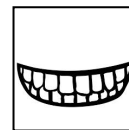


Heart attack and stroke risk are higher when high blood sugar levels cause damage to the large and small blood vessels. High blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, and smoking increase the risk even more.

Poor Circulation

Loss of blood supply to the legs and feet can lead to problems with healing and infection. Sores or ulcers that do not heal can lead to amputation.

Oral Health



Gum disease and other mouth problems such as tooth decay, fungal infections, changes in taste, and dry mouth are more likely. An infection in the mouth can increase blood sugar levels.

Sexual Problems

Men may experience impotence, ejaculation problems and low testosterone. Women may have problems with arousal, vaginal lubrication, ability to orgasm, and infections.

What You Can Do to Lower Your Risk			
What You Need	How Often	Reason	Goal
A1C Test	Every 3 or 6 months	Know if blood sugar levels are in your goal range	< 7% for most people If you do not know your A1C goal, ask.
Urine albumin /creatinine ratio and eGFR	Yearly	Check the health of your kidneys. High blood sugar levels and high blood pressure damage blood vessels in the kidneys.	< 30 mg/L
Cholesterol Test	Every 5 years or more often as needed	If cholesterol levels are not in goal range, discuss changes that could help reduce risk of stroke, heart attack, kidney and eye problems.	Triglycerides: < 150 LDL: < 100 HDL: > 40 for men; > 50 for women
Blood Pressure Check	Each Visit	If blood pressure is not in goal range, discuss changes that could help reduce risk of stroke, heart attack, kidney and eye problems.	<130/80 (Discuss your goal with provider)
Clinic Appointment	Every 6 months or more often if needed	Discuss your concerns, exam results, blood sugar levels, alcohol intake, smoking and exercise habits.	Set or revise personal health goals
Dilated Eye Exam	Every 1-2 years	Check for small blood vessel damage in the back of the eyes.	Prevent eye problems that can affect vision
Dental Exam	Every 6 months	Check for tooth or gum problems.	Prevent gum problems and tooth decay which can raise blood sugar levels
Complete Foot Exam	Yearly	Check nerve function, circulation, and any nail or skin problems.	Prevent ulcers and amputation
Flu/Pneumonia Vaccinations	As needed; ask provider	To protect against illness.	Prevent high blood sugar levels due to illness
Diabetes Education and Support	At diagnosis, yearly, and with any new issues that complicate self-care	Learn about how to stay healthy with diabetes; help you set personal health goals, build knowledge and confidence, and provide support.	Attend a class taught by dietitians and/or nurses who are diabetes care and education specialists; include family or support persons to learn with you

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 3/2020. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#4814