

NATIONAL DIABETES EDUCATION PROGRAM

# Tips to Help You Stay Healthy



**There are many good reasons to take action to manage your diabetes.**

- Each day you are likely to feel good and have more energy.
- In the future, you are likely to stay healthy and prevent or delay problems that can involve your heart, blood vessels, eyes, kidneys, and nerves.

**Follow this four-step action plan. It will help you live a long and healthy life.**

## Step 1:

**LEARN ABOUT  
DIABETES**

Diabetes means that your blood glucose is too high. Glucose comes from the food we eat. An organ called the pancreas (PAN-kree-as) makes insulin (IN-suh-lin). Insulin helps glucose get from your blood into your cells. Cells take the glucose and turn it into energy.

In **type 1 diabetes**, the pancreas does not make any insulin. In **type 2 diabetes**, the body does not make enough insulin or use it very well. As a result, glucose builds up in your blood and cannot get into your cells. If the blood glucose stays too high, it can damage your body. Adults most often get type 2 diabetes. **Gestational** (jes-TAY-shon-al) diabetes occurs when a woman is pregnant. Having it raises the mother's and her child's risk for getting diabetes, mostly type 2, for the rest of their lives.

## Step 2:

**KNOW YOUR  
DIABETES  
ABC's**

- **A1C** measures your average blood glucose level over the past three months.
- High **B**lood pressure (BP) makes your heart work too hard.
- LDL, or bad **C**holesterol, builds up and clogs your arteries. HDL, or good cholesterol, helps remove cholesterol from your blood vessels.

| Test               | Goal*                                       | Check How Often?     |
|--------------------|---|----------------------|
| <b>A1C</b>         | below 7                                     | Twice a year         |
| <b>BP</b>          | 130/80                                      | Each doctor's visit  |
| <b>Cholesterol</b> | <b>LDL</b> below 100<br><b>HDL</b> above 40 | At least once a year |

\*For most people with diabetes

## Step 3:

**MANAGE YOUR  
DIABETES**

- **Know your ABC's** and blood glucose targets. Learn how and when to test your blood glucose, and how to use the results to manage your diabetes.
- **Ask for a diabetes meal plan** to help you choose healthy foods.

**Healthy food choices include:**

- fruits, vegetables, fish, lean meats and poultry, dry peas or beans, and low-fat or skim milk and cheese.
- whole grain foods — whole wheat bread and crackers, oatmeal, brown rice, and cereals.

**Avoid foods that have a lot of sugar, salt, and fat.**

**Eat smaller portions of meat, fish and poultry, and larger portions of fruits and vegetables.**

**STEP 3 CONTINUED...**

- **Get 30 to 60 minutes of physical activity**, such as brisk walking, on most days of the week.
- **Seek help if you feel down.** You may feel better if you talk with a mental health counselor, friend, or a support group, clergy, or family member.
- **Stop smoking** – seek help to quit.
- **Take your medicines** even when you feel good. Ask if you need to take a low-dose aspirin to prevent a heart attack or stroke.
- **Check your feet every day.** Call your health care team if a cut, sore, blister, or bruise on your feet or toes does not begin to heal after one day.
- **Brush your teeth and floss every day** to avoid problems with your mouth, teeth, or gums.
- **Report any changes in your eyesight** to your doctor.

**WORK WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM TO CREATE A PLAN TO HELP YOU REACH YOUR SELF-CARE GOALS.**

- **Make a list** of all your reasons to manage your diabetes for life.
- **Set goals** you can reach. Break a big goal into small steps.
- **Engage the whole family** in being more physically active.
- **Stay at a healthy weight** by using your meal plan and being physically active.
- **Learn** what causes you to slip up in reaching your goals. Plan how to do better next time.
- **Reach** out to friends or family for support or when you feel down.
- **Give yourself a healthy reward** for doing well.

**Step 4:**

**GET REGULAR CARE**

**Avoid problems** by seeing your health care team at least twice a year to:

- Get your ABC tests, other exams, and yearly flu shot.
- Have your blood pressure, weight, and feet checked.
- Review your record of blood glucose self tests, your ABC numbers, and your action plan.

If you have Medicare, ask what diabetes services are covered. To learn more go to: [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov).

**MY ACTION PLAN TO MANAGE MY DIABETES**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

| My Target            | Test Results | Date  |
|----------------------|--------------|-------|
| A1C _____            | _____        | _____ |
| Blood pressure _____ | _____        | _____ |
| Cholesterol _____    | _____        | _____ |

**Three reasons to manage my diabetes for life:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Three things I will work on over the next three months to reach my self-care goals:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

**The people who can help me do these things (e.g., family member, friend, health care team):**

\_\_\_\_\_

*Place your plan where you will see it often. Keep it up to date. Take action to be healthy and control your diabetes for life – now and in the future.*

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Diabetes Education Program is jointly sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with the support of more than 200 partner organizations. **To learn more visit [www.YourDiabetesInfo.org](http://www.YourDiabetesInfo.org) or call 1-888-693-NDEP**

Sandra Parker, R.D., C.D.E., Coordinator, St. Mary's Health Link Diabetes Support Team, Grand Rapids, MI reviewed this material for technical accuracy.

