

# Taking care of your heart when you have diabetes



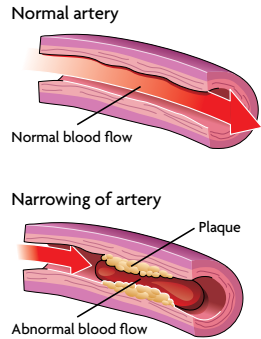
## Why is it so important to take care of my heart when I have diabetes?

Heart disease is by far the most common cause of death for both men and women with diabetes. Many lifestyle choices you make can help reduce your chance of having a heart attack or stroke.



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# Why does having diabetes put a person at higher risk for heart disease?



Diabetes by itself is a risk factor for heart disease, but diabetes also affects a person at risk for having a heart attack or stroke in other ways. The blood vessels of a person with diabetes are more affected by other known risk factors for heart disease, such as using tobacco, high blood pressure and high LDL cholesterol. Most people with diabetes have at least one of these three additional risk factors.

Long-term uncontrolled blood sugars also seem to have an effect on the health of the blood vessels.

Other risk factors for heart disease are being overweight and not getting enough physical activity.

## Risk Factors for Developing Heart Disease

- Having diabetes
- Using tobacco
- High blood pressure
- High LDL cholesterol
- Having high triglyceride levels
- Being Overweight
- Not getting enough physical activity
- Uncontrolled blood sugars

## What can a person with diabetes do to prevent heart disease?

If you look at the list of risk factors above, you may notice that each of the risk factors are affected by lifestyle choices.

The three most important steps you can take to prevent heart disease are:

1. Losing even a moderate amount of weight by making healthy food choices
2. Staying away from tobacco
3. Becoming physically active most days. *Even if you don't lose weight, regular exercise reduces your risk of heart disease.*

## Losing weight

Extra weight affects your blood pressure, blood sugar, blood cholesterol and triglycerides. The best way to lose weight involves daily physical activity and making healthy food choices, such as avoiding sugary drinks and watching portions. Talk to your regional dietitian about making a food plan to help you lose weight.

## Staying away from tobacco

Tobacco narrows and restricts your blood vessels. Having diabetes also does this. Using tobacco in addition to having diabetes causes serious damage to your vessels. Tobacco is addicting. Many people need support to help them stop using tobacco. Talk to your provider about tobacco cessation resources available in your region.



## Become physically active

Exercise reduces blood sugar, blood cholesterol, blood pressure and triglycerides. It also helps with losing weight and staying mentally healthy. Set a goal for physical activity and make a plan. Think about: What kind of physical activity can you do? What time of day will you do it? How long will you be active? What days will you do it?

My physical activity goal is: \_\_\_\_\_



## How will I know if my lifestyle changes are working?

When a person has diabetes it is important to know your “goals for control” and keep track of your numbers for blood pressure, home blood sugars, A1C, cholesterol, triglycerides and weight.

Ask your educator or provider to help you fill this table out:

	My goal for control	My latest numbers
Blood pressure		
Home blood sugars: Fasting and premeal 2 hours after eating		
A1C		
LDL cholesterol		
Triglycerides		
Weight		

## More Information

For more information or if you have questions, contact:

**Diabetes Educator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_



**Diabetes Program**

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**[www.anthc.org/diabetes](http://www.anthc.org/diabetes)**  
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