

MANAGING YOUR DIABETES



Why is it important to test and monitor your glucose levels?

If you are diagnosed with diabetes, you and your health care provider need to do a HbA1C test at least twice a year. Target HbA1C goals vary depending on your age and other factors. For most people the recommended goal is an HbA1C level below 7%. This test tells you your average level of blood sugar over the past 2 to 3 months. The higher your HbA1C level is, the higher your risk of developing complications.

Regularly monitoring your own blood sugar levels at home is very important because diabetes affects many major organs, including your heart, blood vessels, nerves, eyes, and kidneys. Managing your diabetes and controlling your blood sugar can lower your risk for these complications.

Potential complications of diabetes and co-morbidities include:

COMPLICATION	EXPLANATION
Heart and blood vessel disease	Diabetes is associated with an increased risk of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure and the narrowing of blood vessels
Nerve damage (neuropathy in limbs)	High blood sugar over time can damage and destroy your nerves, resulting in tingling, numbness, burning, pain, or eventual loss of feeling that usually begins at the tips of your toes or fingers, and gradually spreads upward
Other nerve damage	Damage to nerves of the heart can contribute to irregular heart rhythms. Nerve damage in the digestive system can cause problems with nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or constipation. For men, nerve damage can cause erectile dysfunction
Kidney Disease	Diabetes may lead to chronic kidney disease or irreversible end-stage kidney disease, which may require dialysis or a kidney transplant
Eye damage	Diabetes increases the risk of serious eye diseases, such as diabetic retinopathy, cataracts, and glaucoma, and may damage the blood vessels of the retina, potentially leading to blindness
Skin conditions	Diabetes may leave you more susceptible to skin problems, including bacterial and fungal infections
Slow Healing	Left untreated, cuts and blisters can become serious infections, which may heal poorly. Severe damage might require toe, foot, or leg amputation
Hearing impairment	Hearing problems are more common in people with diabetes
Sleep apnea	Obstructive sleep apnea is common in people living with type 2 diabetes. Obesity may be the main contributing factor to both conditions.
Dementia	Type 2 diabetes increase the risk of Alzheimer's disease and other disorders that cause dementia. Poor control of blood sugar levels is linked to more rapid decline in memory and other thinking capabilities

Key steps to take to manage your diabetes well

1. Commit to managing your diabetes

Learn all you can about your diabetes. Make healthy eating and physical activity part of your daily routine.

2. Work with your team

Establish a relationship with your diabetes educator or coach and ask your team for help when you need it. Find one health care practitioner on our network to manage all your conditions holistically.

3. Identify yourself

Wear a bracelet or necklace that says you are living with diabetes, especially if you are taking insulin or other blood sugar-lowering medication.

4. Schedule regular examinations and tests

See your health care provider at least twice a year and ensure to do an HbA1C test. Prepare for your upcoming doctors' consultation. You also need to have your eyes and feet examined/screened at least once a year.

5. Keep your vaccinations up to date

High blood sugar can weaken your immune system. Get a flu shot every year. Your health care provider may also recommend other vaccines.



6. Take care of your teeth

Diabetes may leave you prone to more-serious gum infections. Brush and floss your teeth regularly and schedule dental exams. Consult your dentist if your gums bleed or look red and swollen.

7. Pay attention to your feet

Wash your feet daily in lukewarm water, dry them gently, especially between the toes, and moisturize them with lotion. Check your feet every day for blisters, cuts, sores, redness and swelling. Consult your health care provider if you have a sore or other foot problem that is not healing.

8. Keep your blood pressure and cholesterol under control

Eating healthy foods and exercising regularly can go a long way in controlling high blood pressure and cholesterol. Take medication as prescribed.

9. If you smoke or use other types of tobacco, ask your health care provider to help you quit

Smoking increases your risk of various diabetic complications. Talk to your health care provider or coach about ways to stop smoking tobacco.

10. Use alcohol sparingly

Depending on the type of drink, alcohol may lower or raise blood sugar levels. If you choose to drink alcohol, only do so with a meal. The recommendation is no more than one drink a day for women and no more than two drinks daily for men. Check your blood sugar frequently after consuming alcohol.

11. Many alternative medicines help people living with diabetes

Research has shown popular supplements for diabetes, talk to your health care provider about what supplements can support you.

12. Build and boost your resilience

Studies have shown that people with high resilience levels are related to lower HbA1c levels, indicating better glycaemic control. Some people are lucky to be born with a high resilience level, but even if you're not one of them you can still boost your resilience. Resilience can help you reduce stress and anxiety and improve your coping skills. Some tips to get you started:

- **Make connections.** Maintain good relationships with close family members and friends. Accept their support and offer it in return
- **Accept that change is part of life.** Accept circumstances that can't be changed and focus on what you can change
- **Act.** When there are situations you can change, act. Don't cut yourself off from problems and wish they would disappear
- **Keep things in perspective.** When you are facing difficult circumstances, thinking about the problems in the big picture. Have a long-term perspective – such as thinking about whether it would matter in five years. Avoid making a small think a bigger problem than it really is
- **Take care of yourself.** Get regular exercise, eat a healthy diet, get enough sleep and practice self-care. Consider meditating or joining other social communities. Get involved in activities that are fun and relaxing for you.

Preparing for health appointments

Your health team and frequency of appointments and assessments should consist of:

HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL	FREQUENCY OF APPOINTMENTS	TESTS/ASSESSMENTS
Primary Health Care Provider (GP on our network)	At least twice a year	HbA1C Lipogram
Specialist Physician / Endocrinologist	Only when referred by your Primary Health Care Provider	As indicated on your referral
Diabetes Educator or Health Coach	As per your agreed programme	
Foot doctor (Podiatrist)	Once a year	Foot screening
Optometrist	Once a year	Screen for Diabetic retinopathy

Steps to take before your appointment with your Primary health Care Provider

Prepare for your appointment by being considering the following questions you will be asked:

1. Have you experience any symptoms and when did they start?
2. Are you experiencing any difficulties with your medication? This can range from having co-payments or experiencing side effects on your medicines.
3. What medicines are you taking regularly, including dietary supplements and herbal remedies
4. What are your typical daily meals? Do you eat between meals or before bedtime?
5. How much alcohol do you drink?
6. How much exercise do you get?



Important questions to ask your health team

Topics you want to clarify with your health care practitioner:

1. Confirming your HbA1C target
2. The frequency and timing of blood glucose monitoring
3. How to recognize and treat high and low blood sugar
4. Exercise and adjusting your food and medicine intake accordingly

Understanding the benefits available to you to manage your condition effectively

When you have a good understanding of the scheme benefits available to you, you should be able to manage your condition without any co-payments or out of pocket expenses.

When you register on the Diabetes Care programme, you have access to additional benefits. Your benefits and available limits can also be viewed on the website or Discovery app. If you need assistance with this, speak to your health coach or diabetes educator who will help you to navigate and understand these benefits