

Must Know Health Info

Health Information from the Experts at Johns Hopkins Medicine



Diabetes and Your Heart

Keep your:

- blood sugar
- *blood pressure*
- *cholesterol*

as close to normal as possible to protect your heart.

Having diabetes is hard on your heart. You might worry more about other complications, like:

- eye disease
- kidney disease
- nerve disease.

Did you know diabetes can increase your chances of dying from heart disease? It's true! With diabetes, you are more likely to have a heart attack. Also, your heart problems may be worse and strike when you are younger.

Heart disease is very costly to treat. Lots of people who have diabetes have heart disease too. This is why doctors are focused on the diabetes and heart health link. Scientists are trying to learn more about it. Doctors are trying to do more about it.

Diabetes and heart disease: what's the link?

People with diabetes often have all three of the major risk factors for heart disease:

- high blood sugar (glucose)
- high blood pressure
- high blood fats (cholesterol and triglyceride levels).

Each of these risk factors damages blood vessels. The vessels get blocked and are less flexible. This cuts off flow to the heart, making the heart work too hard. This is a disease of the heart and blood vessels (called “cardiovascular disease” or CVD). People with diabetes are more likely to have strokes too. Strokes can happen due to blood vessel disease.

Be smart about your heart

Keep blood sugar, blood pressure, and blood fats as close to normal as you can. This can help keep your blood vessels healthy and protect your heart. Yet, most people with diabetes don't know that. Heart disease is the top cause of death in people with diabetes. Very few know the specific things they can do to maintain heart health.

A few diabetes groups (such as National Institutes of Health and the American Diabetes Association or “ADA”) have just partnered to launch a new project. Their goal is to give patients and their doctors the facts they need. The message is clear in the project's name (“*Be Smart about Your Heart: Control the ABCs of Diabetes*”). Take control of the ABCs of diabetes and live a long healthy life.

A is for A1c. The A1c (A-one-c) test (short for “hemoglobin A1”) gives your average blood sugar over the last three months.

B is for blood pressure. High blood pressure makes your heart work too hard.

C is for cholesterol. “Bad”, or LDL cholesterol can build up. This can clog your arteries.

Do you know your ABC numbers? If you don't, be sure to get them from your health care provider. The ADA suggests these goals and targets for your ABCs.

- Keep your A1C in good control (*less than 7*).
- Keep your blood pressure down (*less than 130/80*).
- Keep your “bad” or LDL cholesterol low (*less than 100*).

If you have diabetes and heart disease, you should keep LDL lower. The ADA suggests your goal should be less than 70. Medicine (“statins”) can be used to reach this goal.

If your ABC numbers are higher than these targets, talk to your doctor. Ask them what actions you can take to reach your ABC targets. Some actions are:

- Stop smoking.
- Make sure to take your medicine.
- Change your diet.
- Get more active.

All these changes can help you reach your ABC targets.

The bottom line is: Do what you can to get closer to your ABC targets. This helps keep your heart healthy.

For more on the “Be Smart About Your Heart” program, and lots of other useful diabetes information, visit the National Diabetes Education Project Web site at www.ndep.nih.gov or call 1-800-438-5383.

*****Authored by Johns Hopkins University and Johns Hopkins Health System*****