


# EDUCATION

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## Mind Your ABCs To Manage Both Diabetes And Heart Disease

(NAPS)—Chances are you know someone with diabetes. About one of every 10 people in the United States has the disease—more than 30 million people.

A

**A1C levels**

B

**Blood pressure**

C

**Cholesterol**

S

**Stop smoking**

Dealing with diabetes to reduce your risk of heart disease can be easier if you know your ABCs.

In fact, you could have diabetes and not know it. About one-quarter of all people with the disease have not been diagnosed.

Here's something else that people might not know: Having diabetes makes you more likely to develop heart disease. The risk is because, with diabetes, too much blood glucose (also called blood sugar) circulates in the bloodstream. The circulating glucose can damage the heart's blood vessels and the nerves that control them.

Adults with diabetes are nearly twice as likely to die from heart disease or stroke as people without diabetes. And people with diabetes tend to develop heart disease at a younger age than people without diabetes.

Fortunately, diabetes can be managed with exercise, a healthy eating plan, and medicine. "With early diagnosis and treatment, heart disease and the other problems of diabetes can be prevented or delayed," says Griffin P. Rodgers, MD, director of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK). "We're working hard to get the word out—managing your diabetes can lower your chances of having heart disease or a stroke."

So ask your health care professional if you should be tested for diabetes. And if you are diagnosed with the disease, work with your health care team to follow the diabetes ABCs:

**A—Take the A1C test.**  
This test shows your average blood glucose level over the past 3 months. (A1C is different from the blood glucose checks that a person with diabetes does every day.) The higher your A1C number, the higher your blood glucose levels are averaging. High levels of blood glucose can harm your heart and blood vessels. The A1C goal for many people with diabetes is below 7 percent. Some people may do better with a slightly higher A1C goal. Ask your health care professional what your goal should be.

**B—Monitor your blood pressure.**  
Blood pressure is the force of your blood against the wall of your blood vessels. If blood pressure gets too high, it makes your heart work too hard. High blood pressure can cause a heart attack or stroke. The blood pressure goal for most people with diabetes is below 140/90 mm Hg. Ask your health care professional what your goal should be, and about medication and lifestyle changes to help you reach and maintain your goal.

**C—Check your cholesterol.**  
LDL ("bad") cholesterol can build up and clog blood vessels and too much bad cholesterol can cause a heart attack or stroke. For adults, LDL should be less than 100 mg/dL. HDL ("good") cholesterol helps remove the "bad" cholesterol from blood vessels. Target HDL levels are 40 mg/dL or higher for men and 50 mg/dL or higher for women. Ask your health care professional what your cholesterol numbers should be.

**S—Stop smoking.**  
Diabetes narrows blood vessels and so does smoking. Both together force your heart to work much harder. If you are a smoker and quit, you will lower your risk for heart attack, stroke, and other diabetes complications. For help quitting, call 1-800-QUITNOW or go to [Smokefree.gov](http://Smokefree.gov).

"You can manage diabetes and its complications through healthy lifestyle habits, which include exercising, following a healthy eating plan, and taking diabetes and heart medications as prescribed by your doctor," says Gary H. Gibbons, MD, director of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI). "Managing diabetes to prevent heart disease can save lives. Please help us spread the word about the Diabetes ABCs."

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