



Eat Healthy to Prevent Diabetes Complications

What about you?

How many times a day do you check your blood glucose? _____

Have you had your hemoglobin A1c checked?

Yes No

Do you smoke?

Yes No

Does heart disease run in your family?

Yes No

How many times a week do you exercise? _____

Have you been told that you have the following problems due to diabetes?

eye problems Yes No

nerve problems Yes No

kidney problems Yes No

Why learn about preventing complications?

- People with diabetes have more and/or develop earlier heart disease, kidney disease, eye problems and nerve damage than people without diabetes.
- Keeping blood glucose under control day after day and year after year can help prevent complications.

What are diabetes complications?

Diseases including eye, heart, kidney and nerve diseases that develops from years of having high blood glucose:

- **Heart disease:** you are more likely to develop heart disease and get it earlier in life. High blood pressure often occurs with heart disease.
- **Eye disease (retinopathy):** diabetes can damage the retina of the eye, which can lead to blindness. You are also more likely to develop cataracts and glaucoma.
- **Kidney disease (nephropathy):** high blood glucose and excess protein can cause a narrowing in the kidney's filtering system. Over many years, this can cause kidney failure. High blood pressure often occurs with kidney disease.
- **Nerve disease (neuropathy):** high blood glucose can cause damage to nerves in several areas - legs, feet, stomach and sexual organs.

Can I prevent complications?

Yes. How you take care of diabetes day after day affects your health in the long term. Follow these suggestions:

- Keep blood glucose in your target range to prevent complications.
- See your doctor regularly and have the tests you need to check how diabetes is affecting your body.

This chart shows you how the things you can control affect the different diabetes complications. The X's show what you can control to help prevent each complication.

| Things you can control | Complications | | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| | High Blood Pressure | Heart Disease | Kidney Disease | Eye Problems | Nerve Damage |
| Blood glucose | X | X | X | X | X |
| Weight | X | X | X | X | X |
| Saturated fat | | X | | | |
| Carbohydrate | | | | | |
| Protein | X | | X | | |
| Sodium (salt) | X | X | X | | |
| Alcohol | X | X | | | X |
| Medicine | X | X | X | X | X |
| Exercise | X | X | | | X |
| Smoking tobacco | X | X | | | X |

What can I do?

- It may be difficult to remember what to do to for each complication. The important thing is to maintain a healthy lifestyle to lessen your chances of developing any complications.
- Your registered dietitian can help you work out a food plan that helps you prevent or delay complications. Tell your RD what and when you like to eat. Make one healthy change at a time.
- Check your blood glucose at different times each day to find out how it changes.
- Have your hemoglobin A1c checked four times a year. This shows your overall blood glucose control.
- Have your blood pressure checked each time you visit a member of your health care team.
- Have your blood cholesterol [total, good (HDL), and bad (LDL)] and triglycerides checked once a year.
- Have your urine checked for protein once a year.
- Take the medicines your doctor prescribes to control your diabetes, blood pressure, cholesterol and triglycerides.
- Keep active! Exercise at least three times a week.

So what should I eat?

- Use your food plan to help keep your blood glucose in your target range and maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat less fat by choosing lean meats and fish, skinless poultry, low-fat lunch meats and hot dogs, low-fat cheeses, nonfat or low-fat milk and yogurt, and fat-free or reduced calorie margarine, spreads and salad dressing.
- Eat plenty of grains and cereals, fruits and vegetables.
- Choose foods that are baked, poached, grilled or steamed, instead of fried.
- If you have high blood triglycerides, choose foods without added sugar and do not drink alcohol.
- Eat less protein by using 2-to-3-oz portions of meat, poultry, fish and cheese (3 oz is about the size of a deck of cards). Drink or eat two or three cups of milk or yogurt a day. Have meatless meals a couple of times a week.
- Eat less salt by seasoning foods with herbs and spices instead of adding salt. Use fresh, frozen or no-salt-added canned vegetables. Look for reduced-sodium soups, lunch meats, tomato sauce and frozen dinners.

Keep track

- Keep food records for one week.
- Record your blood sugar and activity levels on your food record.
- Review your food journal and note any patterns.
- Bring your completed food journal to your next appointment with a registered dietitian.

Reference

Ellen J. Anderson, MS, RD - American Diabetes Association and American Dietetic Association

If you are a registered University of Illinois student and you have questions or concerns, or need to make an appointment, please call: **Dial-A-Nurse at 333-2700**

If you are concerned about any difference in your treatment plan and the information in this handout, you are advised to contact your health care provider.

Visit the McKinley Health Center Web site at: <http://www.mckinley.uiuc.edu>