

Control your diabetes for life!



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Minnesota Diabetes &
Heart Health Collaborative

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Check your blood sugar

What do you need to do?

Talk to your doctor or diabetes educator about the best times to test and what your numbers should be.

- Know when and who to call if your numbers are too high or too low.

When testing your blood sugar:

- Before any meal, a good number is between _____ (fill in – usually 70-130)
- 2 hours after any meal, a good number is _____ (fill in – usually less than 180)
- At bedtime, a good number is _____ (fill in – usually 110-150)

Take your medicines as directed. Tell your doctor right away if you have problems with your medicines.

Know your symptoms of low blood sugar:

- Shaky, weak, dizzy, sweaty, irritable, clumsy, confused, hungry or having a headache

Know how to treat your low blood sugar (usually anything below 70):

- Check your blood sugar if you can
- Drink 1/2 cup of juice or regular pop, eat 5 pieces of hard candy, or eat 3-4 glucose tablets

Write down your blood sugar numbers and your symptoms. Bring your meter and log book to every doctor visit.

Why is it important for you to do this?

Knowing your numbers is important. Numbers can tell you:

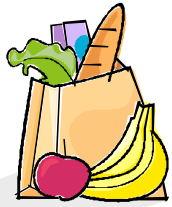
- How your blood sugar changes at different times of day
- How different foods affect your blood sugar levels

Your medicines will help keep your blood sugar numbers where they should be.

If your blood sugar is too low, treat it right away before you faint or get hurt.

A record of your blood sugar numbers helps your doctor know if your diabetes plan is working.

Bring your meter so that the clinic can check that the meter is working right for you.



Eat healthy foods

What do you need to do?

Ask your family for help with food choices.

Know what foods are carbohydrates. Learn how much you should have at each meal.

- Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables.
 - Fresh or frozen are best.
 - Drain and rinse canned foods to get rid of the salt and sugar.
- Eat whole grain foods such as brown rice, whole-wheat tortillas and spaghetti, and multi-grain bread and cereal.
- Avoid sugary drinks such as sweetened tea or coffee, juice, pop and flavored water.

Eat less of the bad fats (fats from animals).

- Choose low or non-fat milk, cheese or yogurt.
- Eat lean meats and trim off any fat.
- Use liquid cooking oil instead of solid fats such as lard and butter.

Add little or no salt (sodium) to your food at the table or when cooking.

Why is it important for you to do this?

- ➔ Eating healthy gives you the energy and the vitamins you need to stay fit and healthy.
- ➔ Carbohydrates have a big effect on your blood sugar levels.
- ➔ Whole grain foods can help keep your blood sugar from rising quickly.
- ➔ Sugary drinks will make your blood sugar rise very high and very quickly, which is not healthy.
- ➔
 - Low or non-fat dairy products will give you calcium without a lot of bad fat.
 - Solid fats such as lard can cause problems with your blood vessels. Liquid (vegetable) fats are healthier.
- ➔ Sodium in table salt can raise your blood pressure.



Be active

What do you need to do?

Be active every day.

- Exercise 30 minutes a day 5 times a week.
- Choose activities you enjoy:
Walk, garden, mow the lawn, dance, bike, swim, take the stairs, park the car farther away, play with your kids, and so on.

Set an exercise goal you can stay with.

- Always check with your doctor before starting an exercise program.
- Start slow and gradually increase the amount of time you exercise.

When you exercise, watch for signs of low blood sugar (see the “Check your blood sugar” section).

- Carry glucose tablets or hard candy with you while exercising.
- Drink water as you exercise.
- Wear a medical identification necklace or bracelet that says you have diabetes.
- Carry a card that says who to call in an emergency.

Why is it important for you to do this?

Exercise helps you:

- Lower your blood sugar
- Boost your energy level and your mood
- Lose weight or maintain a healthy weight
- Lower your cholesterol and blood pressure
- Lower your risk for heart attack and stroke
- Sleep better
- Be more relaxed (see the “Take time to enjoy life” section)

Exercise can sometimes give you symptoms of low blood sugar.

- Be ready to treat low blood sugar right away before you faint and may get hurt (see the “Check your blood sugar” section).



Do not smoke

What do you need to do?

Stay smoke-free.

- If you do not smoke, do not start.

Avoid breathing other people's smoke.

- If someone in your home smokes, ask them to smoke outside.

If you smoke, it is important that you quit.

- It is hard to quit smoking, but with help, you can do it.
- Talk with your doctor, family and friends. Ask for help.
- Call the Clearway Minnesota's tobacco QUITPLAN® Helpline at 1-888-354-7526 (English/Spanish) or 1-877-559-3816 (TTY) to talk to a counselor for help with quitting.

Why is it important for you to do this?

Smoking or breathing smoky air is hard on your body, especially if you have diabetes.

- Breathing smoke or smoking will raise your blood sugar levels.
- Smoking cuts the amount of oxygen in your blood, damaging your skin and organs.
- Smoking raises blood pressure and cholesterol levels, which also makes you more likely to have a stroke or heart attack.
- Smoking damages blood vessels, which can lead to painful leg and foot infections.
- If you stay away from smoke, you will have more energy, find it easier to breathe, have nicer skin and have overall better health.



Take your medicines

What do you need to do?

Take your medicines as directed by your doctor.

If you cannot take them, tell your doctor why.

- Does the medicine make you feel sick?
- Is the medicine too expensive?
- Do you forget to take the medicine or refill it?
- Do you know how to take your medicines?

Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you do not know:

- The names of your medicines
- If a medicine comes in a cheaper generic form
- When you should take it and when you should not
- What the side effects are
- What to do if you forget to take it
- If there are any foods you should not eat
- If you can drive after taking it
- If you should take an aspirin a day for your heart

To remember to take your medicines, try to:

- Use a weekly pill organizer
- Take your medicines with something you do every day – such as brushing your teeth
- List your medicines and check off when you take each one

Why is it important for you to do this?

Medicines help you feel better only if you take them as your doctor directed.

If you stop taking some medicines suddenly, you could get very sick.

- Never stop taking any medicine without talking to your doctor first.
- Some medicines need to be stopped a little each day.

When you know why you are taking medicines, you can take the right ones in the right way.

- When you take medicines the wrong way, your diabetes may not get under control.
- Taking medicines the wrong way can cause other problems and make you sick.



See your doctor

What do you need to do?

Call or see your doctor right away if:

- Your blood sugar levels are higher than usual
- You do not feel well or are more tired than usual
- Your feet are swollen or have sores
- You have a sore that does not heal
- You feel sad or hopeless most of the time

Get an A1C test at least twice a year:

- Your doctor may want to test more often if the A1C number is too high

See your doctor once a year for:

- A cholesterol test
- A referral for a dilated eye exam
- A flu shot (and ask about a pneumonia shot)
- A test to check for kidney problems

At each doctor visit, be sure to have your:

- Blood pressure and weight checked
- Feet checked for problems
- Meter and blood sugar numbers checked
- Self-care plan and goals reviewed
- Medicines reviewed
- Questions answered!

Why is it important for you to do this?

If you do not feel well, you could be at risk for more serious health problems. Do not wait. Tell your doctor how you feel.

An A1C test tells your doctor if your diabetes plan is working. If it is not working, it can be changed before you have any problems.

See your doctor every year even if you feel fine.

- Some problems have no symptoms at first.
- Getting tested can help find problems early.
- This can prevent serious problems such as heart attack, kidney failure, losing your eyesight or losing a foot or leg.

Use every doctor visit to help your diabetes.

- Talk about your diabetes and blood pressure, even if you are coming in for other reasons.



Check your blood pressure

What do you need to do?

A good number for blood pressure is _____ (fill in – usually 140/85).

- Ask your doctor what number is best for you.
- Have your blood pressure checked often and keep a record of your numbers.

Take your blood pressure medicines as your doctor says to control your blood pressure.

Exercise often (see the “Be active” section).

Eat more fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables (see the “Eat healthy foods” section).

Use less salt (sodium).

- Eat fewer ready-made and canned foods that are high in salt (sodium).
- Choose low salt options.

Do not drink much alcohol.

Why is it important for you to do this?

➔ Keeping your blood pressure low can help prevent a heart attack, stroke, kidney disease, blindness and other problems.

- High blood pressure does not have symptoms, but can cause a lot of damage.

➔ Taking your blood pressure medicines can help keep problems from happening.

- Take your medicines as long as your doctor says so that your blood pressure stays down.

➔ Exercise helps keep blood pressure low.

➔ Fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables are low in salt and good for your body.

➔ Too much salt (sodium) can make your blood pressure go higher.

- Ready made and canned foods, as well as fast foods, may have a lot of salt (sodium).

➔ Alcohol also makes blood pressure go higher.



See your dentist

What do you need to do?

Keep your blood sugar near normal. Know what your blood sugar number should be.

Keep your teeth clean and gums healthy.

- Brush your teeth and tongue for 2 minutes at least twice a day.
- Clean between your teeth with dental floss every day.

Stay away from cigarettes, cigar and pipe smoke, and chewing tobacco.

Eat healthy foods. Avoid sugary drinks such as sweetened tea, coffee, juice or flavored water.

Have your teeth cleaned and checked twice a year.

- Tell your dentist that you have diabetes.
- See your dentist if you have any mouth sores, swollen or bloody gums, or loose teeth.

Why is it important for you to do this?

Diabetes affects all parts of your body including your mouth.

Having unhealthy gums or teeth also makes it harder to control your diabetes.

- High blood sugar can cause many problems: tooth decay, gum disease, sores and bad breath.
- Diabetes can weaken your mouth's germ-fighting ability. Brushing fights germs.
- Brushing your teeth can help prevent heart disease (Really!).

Smoking and breathing smoke can lower blood flow to your gums and can dry out your mouth.

Sugary food and drink may cause tooth and gum decay.

Dental exams will find and treat problems early and prevent tooth loss.

- Treating dental problems will help your diabetes control.



Check your feet

What do you need to do?

Check your feet every day.

- Look for redness, sores, cuts, swelling or blisters.
- Look at the top and bottom of each foot and between your toes.
- Use a mirror or ask someone to help.

Wash your feet in warm water every day.

- Do not soak your feet.
- Dry your feet, especially between your toes.
- Use lotion on your feet but NOT between your toes.

Never go barefoot! Always wear shoes and socks.

- Wear comfortable, supportive shoes that fit well and protect your feet.
- Check the inside of your shoes and socks for things that may irritate and damage your skin.

Ask your doctor for a complete foot exam at least once a year.

- Take off your shoes and socks at every doctor visit.
- Tell your doctor if you have any foot problems.
- Are your feet numb, tingling or swollen?
- Do you have sores that do not heal?

Why is it important for you to do this?

Big problems often start as small sores on a foot.

- With diabetes, sores often heal more slowly.
- Treat foot sores early to prevent serious problems such as losing your foot or leg.

Keep your feet clean to prevent sores from happening or getting worse.

- Soaking your feet can dry them out.
- Lotion will help protect your skin and keep it from cracking. Cracked skin can be painful and can get infected.

Protect your feet with shoes and socks to avoid injuries that you may not be able to feel.

Your doctor will look for problems and treat them.

- For some problems, you may have to see a nerve or foot specialist.



Get your eyes checked

What do you need to do?

Keep your blood sugar and blood pressure numbers down. Know what your numbers should be (see the “Check your blood sugar” and “Check your blood pressure” sections).

Stay away from cigarettes, cigar and pipe smoke, and chewing tobacco (see the “Do not smoke” section).

See an eye doctor for a dilated eye exam every year even if you do not have any eye problems.
See your doctor right away if you have trouble seeing clearly.

Why is it important for you to do this?

Having high blood sugar and/or high blood pressure can harm your eyes and can cause blindness. Having both can be very dangerous to your eyes.

Smoking and breathing smoke can lower blood flow to your eyes.

Your eye doctor will look for problems and treat them.

- Eye problems often have no pain or symptoms.
- Treating eye problems early can prevent blindness.



Take time to enjoy life

What do you need to do

Set aside time every day to relax – just 15 minutes a day can help!

Do things that help you relax and enjoy life:

- Sit with your feet up and eyes closed
- Read a book
- Take a walk
- Listen to quiet music
- Meditate, pray or daydream
- Talk with family or friends
- Play with your kids or pets
- Work on a hobby

Talk to your doctor about your stress and how it can be treated.

Ask your family and friends for help.

Join a diabetes support group (see the Additional Resources section for a link to a local listing).

Why is it important for you to do this?

Having diabetes can be stressful. You may:

- Feel overwhelmed
- Have problems at home or at work
- Have money problems
- Feel sick more often
- Be down or depressed (see the “Get help when you feel down” section)

Stress can:

- Make you feel bad
- Raise your blood sugar and blood pressure
- Cause heart disease, depression and much more

Your doctor may have medicines or ideas on how to help you cope with stress.

Relaxing can help you:

- Control your diabetes and avoid other problems
- Improve your mood and energy
- Help you feel better



Get help when you feel down

What do you need to do?

Talk with your doctor if you feel down, overly worried, depressed, anxious, sad or hopeless.

Treatment can help!

- Take all your medicines as directed. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about any problems.
- Ask your family and friends for help.
- Stay active and eat healthy foods.
- Try to lower your level of stress (see the “Take time to enjoy life” section).
- Join a support group.

Why is it important for you to do this?

Diabetes can make you feel down.

- High blood sugar, high blood pressure and stress can bring on these feelings.
- Some medications can cause this feeling when you first start them.
- Feeling this way is not your fault.
- These feelings make it much harder to take care of your diabetes.
- You may have low energy if you feel this way.

There are many ways to treat these feelings.

- Some treatments take time to work. Talk to your doctor right away about getting help.
- Exercise and eating healthy will help your mood and energy level.
- Talking to other people with the same problem can be helpful.



Help yourself and help others

What do you need to do?

Help other people with diabetes by being active in your community and sharing your experience.

- Know where to find answers or people that can help (see the “Resource List” section).
- Talk to other people with diabetes in your community.
- Share stories about what works for people.

Teach people about diabetes.

- Share with others about what people with diabetes need.
- Take part in diabetes events. Raise money or teach people more about diabetes.
- Increase awareness about diabetes by talking to newspapers, schools, churches and businesses.

Join a diabetes support group and share your story.

- If you cannot find a group nearby, talk to your clinic about starting one.

Why is it important for you to do this?

By helping others, you will be helping yourself in many ways.

- You will learn more about new treatments and tools that can help your diabetes.
- You will connect with other people with diabetes in your community.
- You can see what works for other people and how they solve their problems.
- You will get support from others like you.
- You can encourage other people who need help with their diabetes.
- Helping people take better care of their diabetes will benefit everyone you know.