

10 steps to lower your chance of diabetes-related heart problems

When you think about managing your type 2 diabetes, you need to think about your heart health too. Use this checklist to take steps to lower your chance of diabetes-related heart problems. Be sure to talk with your health care team to map out a plan together.



1. Know your (other) numbers – in addition to your A1C or blood sugar level.

- Well-controlled diabetes is better for your heart. But be sure to keep close track of your blood pressure and cholesterol.
- Not everyone with type 2 diabetes has the same risk of heart disease. Cardiovascular risk calculators are used to predict someone's likelihood of having a heart attack or stroke or dying early.
- Remember your family's health history also plays a role.



2. Be active, get regular exercise.

- Sitting for long periods of time, not exercising, or both, are harmful.
- Aim for 150 minutes of activity per week (that's just over 20 minutes a day).
- Housework, brisk walking, dancing, gardening, swimming and riding a bike are all good ways to stay active. Doing 10-minute bursts of activity at a time counts - and they add up!



3. Choose a heart-healthy diet that also helps control your diabetes.

- For example, try to choose:
 - Plenty of non-starchy vegetables and fresh fruits
 - Whole-grain foods
 - Lean proteins
 - Healthy fats (nuts, seeds, avocado and vegetable oils)
 - Foods low in sugar
- Talk with your care team and ask whether nutritional counseling might be helpful.



4. Maintain a healthy weight or lose weight, if needed.

- If you're overweight, losing just 5% of your total body weight can improve your health (for example, lose 10 pounds if you weigh 200 pounds).
- Watch your waistline. Waist size should ideally be less than 35 inches for women and less than 40 inches for men, but ask your care team. Recommendations may differ depending on your race or ethnic background.



5. Take medications as directed.

- Ask whether you should be taking a medication (for example, a statin, an SGLT2 inhibitor, or GLP1 receptor agonist) that can lower the chance of a heart attack, stroke, hospital stay, or related deaths.
- Always report any side effects or other issues about your medications, including cost.



6. Quit smoking or using tobacco.

- Ask for help. Call 1-800-784-8669 (1-800-QUIT-NOW).



7. Lower stress and get enough sleep.

- Find ways to cope and manage stress.
- Aim for seven or more uninterrupted hours of shut-eye a night. If you think you may have sleep apnea, a common disorder in which your breathing stops briefly during sleep, talk with your care team as this can affect your heart health.



8. Get regular health screenings.

- Regular eye, foot, dental and heart checks are important. Plan ahead and mark your calendar.



9. Rally your team and keep everyone updated.

- Managing diabetes and related complications requires a team approach.
- Make sure to tell all your clinicians about any changes to your health. Take time to review your medications and speak up if you are having difficulty being active, eating healthy, or adopting other healthy changes.



10. Spread the word.

- Most people with type 2 diabetes don't know about the strong link between diabetes and cardiovascular disease.
- Spread the word to empower others to take action for a healthy heart.