Type 2 diabetes makes it more likely that someone will have a stroke or develop various forms of heart disease. Diabetes can also worsen outcomes among those with cardiovascular disease.

In addition to yearly eye exams, daily foot care and routine blood sugar testing, you need to be mindful of your heart health, too. Mapping out a plan to assess and lower your personal risk of heart disease and stroke is a critical part of managing diabetes now and in the future. Taking certain medications, choosing a heart-healthy lifestyle, and learning about your personal risk — the chances you will have heart or blood vessel problems — can help.
Adding Novel Diabetes Medications Can Lower Blood Sugar and Cardiovascular Risk, too

In addition to lowering blood sugar levels, two types of diabetes medications carry added heart benefits and can lower the chance of having a heart attack or stroke or dying from one in people with diabetes and existing heart disease. In clinical trials, they’ve also been linked to losing weight and lowering blood pressure, which also protect your heart.

These medications include:

• Sodium-glucose Cotransporter-2 inhibitors, also known as SGLT2 inhibitors
• Glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonists, also known as GLP-1RAs

When you start, you will begin taking a low amount, or dose, of medicine. Your health care professional will gradually increase the dose.

Many people with type 2 diabetes and existing heart or blood vessel disease benefit from adding a new type of diabetes medicine to help manage blood sugar and heart risks.

Based on discussions with my doctor, I should consider taking a:

☐ SGLT2 inhibitor

☐ GLP-1RA
**Key Considerations**

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>SGLT2 inhibitors</th>
<th>GLP-1RAs</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>How it’s taken</strong></td>
<td>By mouth</td>
<td>Self-injection under the skin</td>
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</table>
| **Things to keep in mind** | It’s important to:  
  • Stay hydrated  
  • Report any dizziness or faint feelings  
  • Report any foot ulcers and wounds that don’t seem to be healing  
  • Watch for signs of yeast and/or urinary tract infections (UTIs), which can result in increased urge to urinate, pain with urination, blood in the urine  
  • Practice good hygiene to prevent problems | It’s important to:  
  • Report any vomiting or abdominal pain  
  • Remember that this medicine slows how quickly food leaves your gut and is processed into glucose in your bloodstream  
    • If you eat too much or too quickly, you may feel overly full or nauseous  
  You will be started on a lower dose or amount of the medication. As the amount is increased, you may want to eat smaller meals to see how it affects you. Typically, these symptoms get better once you’ve been on the medications for a period of time. |

- Always report any concerns that you have related to taking these and other medications.
- If you take other medications that also lower your blood sugar, you may need to check your blood sugar levels more often and watch for signs that your blood sugar level is too low (called hypoglycemia). Common signs are weakness, dizziness and confusion.
- Don’t make any changes to your medications without discussing it with your health team.
Medication and Lifestyle Changes
Diabetes & Heart Disease

Making Heart-Healthy Choices Every Day

Other steps I am taking, or should take, to help lower my risk of developing heart disease or having stroke, having repeat heart attacks or stroke or dying:

In addition to adding this medication, I should also continue to focus on:

- Healthy eating
- Getting regular exercise
- Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight
- Avoiding tobacco, including exposure to other people’s smoke
- Reducing stress and feeling more in control
- Getting routine foot and eye exams
- Taking my medications as prescribed

- Keeping track of key health risk factors, including my:
  - Hemoglobin A1c
  - Cholesterol
  - Blood pressure
  - Body weight/waist circumference

- Keeping regular follow-up medical visits to check blood sugar levels (usually every 3 months if not in control and 6 months if well managed), as well as other cardiovascular risk factors

Remember that your chance of having heart troubles or a stroke changes over time. That’s why it’s a good idea to revisit your heart health as part of ongoing efforts to manage your diabetes.
Keeping Discussions about Diabetes and Heart Health Front and Center

Topics to bring up with my health care professional at each visit:

• Any changes in how you feel or new symptoms
• Concerns about your medications (for example, cost, side effects, difficulty understanding how to take them, taking too many)
• How to manage other conditions
• What to watch for in between visits, and whom to call and when
• Your goals and what’s important for managing your risk of heart and vessel problems
• What worries you most when it comes to managing diabetes and related heart problems

For more information, visit CardioSmart.org/Diabetes
Questions / Notes: