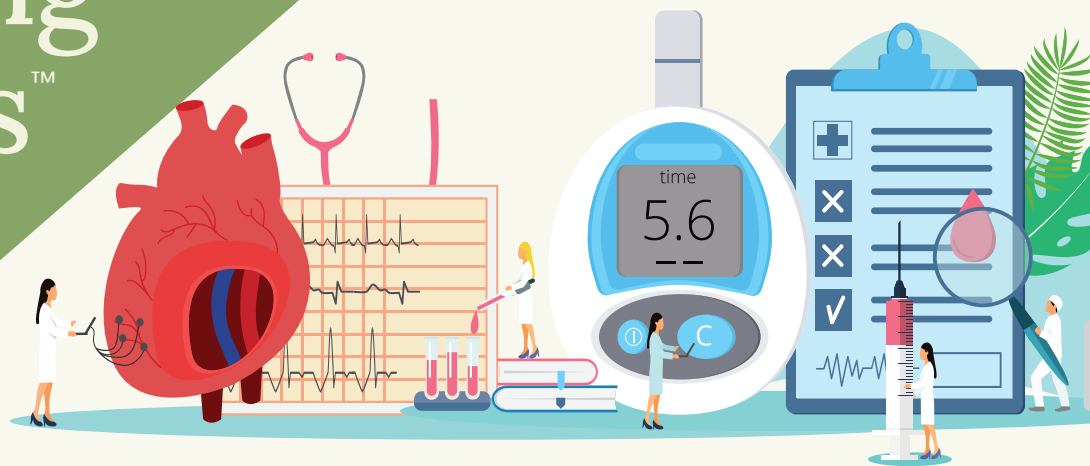


# Managing Diabetes™

## Spring 2022



## The Link Between Heart Disease and Diabetes

Diabetes and heart disease often go hand in hand. If you or a loved one are living with diabetes, it's important to understand the link between the two conditions to help protect your heart. The good news is that small changes can help you better manage your diabetes and protect your heart.

### WHAT IS HEART DISEASE?

Heart disease—also known more broadly as “cardiovascular disease”—refers to conditions that affect the heart, blood vessels, and arteries. The most common type is coronary artery disease (CAD), which impacts an estimated 20 million individuals in the U.S. CAD is caused by the buildup of plaque, which narrows the inside of the arteries and decreases blood flow. Decreased blood flow to the heart can cause a heart attack, while decreased blood flow to the brain can cause a stroke.

This narrowing of the arteries can affect other areas of the body, too. A related, but lesser-known condition is peripheral artery disease (PAD). With PAD, blood flow to the legs and feet is decreased. PAD is often the first sign that a person with diabetes has cardiovascular disease.

### HOW DOES DIABETES AFFECT YOUR HEART?

Over time, high blood sugar can damage the blood vessels and nerves that control your heart. People with diabetes are also more likely to have high blood pressure, high LDL (“bad”) cholesterol, high triglycerides, and low HDL (“good”) cholesterol, which can increase the risk for heart disease. Your doctor can screen for these conditions with simple tests.

### HEART-HEALTHY TIPS

These lifestyle changes can help lower your risk for heart disease or keep it from getting worse, while also helping you manage your diabetes:

**Eat a Healthy Diet**—eating a diet with plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, lean protein, and whole grains, while drinking enough water is vital to managing diabetes and protecting your heart. Avoid processed food, fast food, sugary drinks, and alcohol.

**Maintain a Healthy Weight**—if you're overweight, losing even a modest amount of weight can lower your triglycerides and blood sugar. Modest weight loss means 5% to 7% of body weight. This translates to 10 and 14 pounds for a 200-pound person.

**Be Physically Active**—get active! Aim for 150 minutes per week of moderate physical activity, such as brisk walking. Being physically active makes your body more sensitive to insulin, which can help you manage your diabetes. Physical activity also helps control blood sugar levels and lowers your risk of heart disease.

**Manage Stress**—stress can raise your blood pressure and lead to unhealthy behaviors, such as drinking too much alcohol or overeating. Instead, identify healthy ways to destress—including visiting a mental health counselor, meditating, or getting support from friends and family.

### MANAGE YOUR ABCS:

- Get a regular A1C test to measure your average blood sugar over 2 to 3 months; aim to stay in your target range as much as possible.
- Try to keep your blood pressure below 140/90 mm Hg (or within the target your doctor sets).
- Manage your cholesterol levels through diet and exercise.
- Stop smoking or don't start.
- Work with your healthcare team for help managing diabetes and avoiding health complications such as heart disease.

**References:** “Diabetes and Your Heart.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 7 May 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/library/features/diabetes-and-heart.html>.



## Diabetes and Statin Medications

### WHAT IS A STATIN MEDICATION AND WHY DO I NEED IT?


Heart attacks and strokes are the most common causes of death among people with diabetes. Statins [STAT-ins] are prescription medications that can help prevent a heart attack or stroke by reducing the amount of cholesterol [koh-LESS-ter-ah!] your body makes.

Too much cholesterol in the blood can cause atherosclerosis [ath-uh-roh-skler-OH-sis]. This is a build-up of dangerous plaque [plak] in the walls of your arteries. If a piece of plaque breaks off, it can cause a blood clot or block in your artery, stopping the flow of blood. If blood is blocked in an artery on the heart, it causes a heart attack. If it happens in the brain, it causes a stroke


While taking a statin can lower your cholesterol by 30% or more, it works if you continue to take it.

Talk with your healthcare provider before you stop taking statins or any other prescription medication. Your healthcare provider will choose a statin and dose level that is right for you.


**Reference:** Intermountain HealthCare Fact Sheet for Patients and Families – Diabetes’s and Statin Medications



**Control  
Glucose**



**Follow  
a Diet**



**Take  
Medication**

# Mental Health and Diabetes

Living with diabetes can take its toll on your mental health. The daily blood sugar checks, insulin doses, meal plans, and efforts to stay active can take up a huge amount of time and mental energy, leaving you feeling drained and overwhelmed. That's why it's important to be mindful of how you're feeling and to reach out to friends, family, and your healthcare team. Physical wellness is only one part of living with diabetes. You need to care for your mental health, too!

## ANGER IS NATURAL

While anger is a normal response to a life-changing diagnosis or the stress of a chronic illness, it is important that you not allow your anger to harm yourself or those close to you.

To manage your anger, you need to recognize what makes you angry. This could be fear, loss of control, or anger at yourself. The following are a few things you can do if you start to feel angry or upset:

- Practice deep breathing
- Take a walk
- Drink a glass of water
- Remove yourself from the situation
- Stretch

## LOOK OUT FOR DENIAL

You may have experienced denial if you've ever thought one or more of the following:

- "One bite won't hurt"
- "I don't have time to do it"
- "This will heal itself"
- "My diabetes isn't serious"
- "I'll go to the doctor later"

While denial is common experience, there are steps you can take to ensure you're not stuck there. Work with your diabetes care team to plan and set personal goals. Involve your family and friends; let them know how they can support you as you work towards your goals and stick to your treatment plan.



## DEPRESSION CAN AFFECT ANYONE

While depression is a relatively common condition, it can be detrimental to your health and difficult to detect. You may be depressed if you are experiencing one or more of the following symptoms:

- Loss of interest or pleasure
- Change in sleep patterns
- Waking up earlier than normal
- Change in appetite
- Trouble concentrating
- Loss of energy
- Nervousness
- Guilt
- Morning sadness
- Suicidal thoughts
- Withdrawal from friends and activities
- Declining school and work performance

Depression is treatable. If you think you're depressed, contact your primary care provider.

**Reference:** "Mental Health." Mental Health | ADA, <https://www.diabetes.org/healthy-living/mental-health>.

1. Part of helping you live the healthiest life possible is protecting you from sickness and disease when possible. The COVID-19 vaccine is covered 100% on all SelectHealth® plans. Please **visit [selecthealth.org/who-we-are/covid-19-coverage](https://selecthealth.org/who-we-are/covid-19-coverage)** if you have any questions about COVID-19 coverage information.
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