Diabetes and Heart Disease

American Diabetes Association®
Diabetes Advisor

Has your doctor said that you're at high risk for heart disease? Do you have diabetes? Have you already had a heart attack? If you said "yes" to any of these questions, you are more likely to have a heart attack or a stroke. But you can take steps to prevent heart disease or lower your chances of having a heart attack or stroke.

What causes heart disease?

Heart disease occurs when the blood vessels (the arteries, veins, and capillaries that the heart moves blood through) become narrowed or blocked from a blood clot. If the blood supply to your heart is cut off by a blood clot, you are having a heart attack. If blood flow to the brain is blocked, you are having a stroke.

What steps can I take to prevent heart disease?

The closer your "**ABCs**" are to your targets, the better your chances of preventing heart disease, heart attacks, or strokes.

A is for A1C

The A1C test tells you your average blood glucose over the past 2 to 3 months. Your average blood glucose may be reported in 2 ways:

- A1C (as a percentage)
- Estimated average glucose (eAG) in numbers similar to your blood glucose meter readings

Talk with your doctor about the best target for you. Write your latest result and your target in the following tables.

ADA Targets for the A1C	My Result	My Target
A1C: below 7%		

B is for blood pressure

Your blood pressure is the force of blood inside your blood vessels. When your blood pressure is high, your heart has to work harder than it should. Write your latest result and your target here.

ADA Blood Pressure Target	My Result	My Target
Below 130/80 mmHg		

C is for cholesterol

Your cholesterol numbers tell you how much fat, also called lipids, is in your blood.

- LDL cholesterol, also called "bad" cholesterol, can clog your blood vessels and lead to heart disease.
- HDL cholesterol, also called "good" cholesterol, helps protect your heart.
- Triglycerides, another kind of blood fat, raise your risk for heart disease.

Talk to your doctor about when you should have your cholesterol checked and if you should be taking medicine.

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How can I manage my ABCs?

You help reach your targets when you:

- Make smart food choices
- Lose weight if you need to
- Exercise and are active
- Quit smoking
- Take medicines (if needed)

Make smart food choices

Knowing what you eat and how much you eat can make a big difference in your blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels. Below are some ways to make smart food choices. Place a check mark next to the steps you're willing to try. To learn more about how to make these changes, talk with your health care team.

Changing what you eat and how much you eat can make a big difference in your blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels.

☐ Limit saturated fat (found in fatty meats, poultry skin, butter, 2% or whole milk, ice cream, cheese, palm oil, coconut oil, lard, and shortening).

☐ Eat less salt, also called sodium.

☐ Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day.

☐ Cut back on high-cholesterol foods (such as egg yolks, high-fat meat and poultry, liver and other organ meats, and high-fat dairy products like whole milk).

☐ Eat fish 2 or 3 times a week. Choose fish high in the kind of fat that protects your heart (such as albacore tuna, mackerel, rainbow trout, sardines, and salmon).

Lose weight or take steps to prevent weight gain

☐ Cut down on calories and fat.

☐ Eat smaller portion sizes.

☐ Try to be more physically active than you are now.

Be physically active

☐ Aim for a total of about 30 minutes of physical activity, such as brisk walking, five days of the week.

If you smoke or use e-cigarettes, quit

☐ Ask your doctor for help. You can also call your state quit line at **1-800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669)** or **visit smokefree.gov**.

Take medicines

Medicines can help you reach your **ABC** targets and that lowers your risk of heart disease. Your doctor can tell you which medicines are best for you.