

Taking care of your heart can prevent complications to your health.

Heart health is something we all need to understand. It's especially important if you have diabetes. That's because people with diabetes have a greater risk for developing and dying from heart disease, such as a heart attack or stroke. And it can occur earlier in life than with those who don't have diabetes. By managing diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol, you can reduce your risk and make a big difference in the quality of your life.

Lifestyle changes, such as choosing foods wisely and being physically active, as well as taking medication, can help prevent heart disease or reduce the chance of having a second heart attack. Another way to lower your risk is by managing the ABCs of diabetes.

- A** is for A1C, a test that measures average blood sugar over the past 3 months
- B** is for blood pressure
- C** is for cholesterol

People with diabetes need to ask their healthcare provider what their ABC numbers are and how to reach their target numbers. By working toward a total diabetes care plan, you can manage blood sugar and other cardiovascular risk factors with improved control and results you'll feel good about.

Promoting a healthy heart: It starts by managing your ABCs.

What do the ABCs mean?

A is for A1C — A1C is short for Hemoglobin A1C, a blood glucose (sugar) check “with a memory.” It tells you your average blood sugar for the past 2–3 months. The American Diabetes Association (ADA) recommends that people aim for an A1C below 7%. An A1C of 7% is about the same as an average blood sugar level of 170 mg/dL.

B is for blood pressure — Your blood pressure numbers tell you the force of blood pushing against your blood vessel walls. When your blood pressure is high, your heart has to work harder than it should. The ADA recommends that you keep your blood pressure below 130/80 mmHg.

C is for cholesterol — Your cholesterol numbers tell you the amount of fat in your blood. Some kinds, such as HDL cholesterol, help protect your heart. The HDL target is 40 mg/dL for males, and 50 mg/dL for females. Other kinds, such as LDL cholesterol, can clog your blood vessels and lead to heart disease. The suggested LDL target is less than 100 mg/dL. Triglycerides are another



(continued on page 2)

What do the ABCs mean?
(continued)

kind of blood fat that raises your risk for heart disease. The triglyceride target is less than 150 mg/dL. Individual goals may differ.

How often should my ABCs be tested?

A trip to the doctor's office should be more than a review of your blood sugar levels. The National Institutes of Health and the American Diabetes Association recommend:

- A1C tested at least twice a year
- Blood pressure measured at every doctor visit
- Cholesterol tested once a year

Why is it important to control my ABCs?

More than two-thirds of people with diabetes don't realize they are at a greater risk for heart disease and stroke. In fact, research shows that people with diabetes are two to four times more likely to have a heart attack or stroke than people without diabetes. Managing your ABCs is critical. For example, if high blood sugar goes untreated, over time it can cause damage to vital organs such as your eyes and kidneys. High blood pressure can also damage your heart by making it work too hard. LDL, or "bad" cholesterol, can build up and clog your arteries. Together, these factors can cause you to develop complications of diabetes such as heart attack and stroke, as well as other problems.

What is heart disease?

The most common form of heart disease is coronary artery disease. It is caused by a narrowing or blocking of the blood vessels that carry oxygen and other needed materials to your heart. Blood vessels to your heart can become partially or totally blocked by fatty deposits. When the blood supply to your heart is reduced or cut off, a heart attack may occur.

How can I lower my risk of heart disease?

You can lower your risk by keeping your ABCs of diabetes on target with wise food choices, physical activity and medication. If you smoke, get help to quit. Losing weight can also help you manage your ABCs and prevent heart disease. The closer your numbers are to your targets, the better your chances of preventing heart disease or cutting your risk for another heart attack.

Now that you know the ABCs, add a D.

D is for your doctor. Ask your doctor what your targets are for each of the ABCs. Beyond that, know your numbers. Be sure to obtain the results of each test and write them down, so you can keep track of your ABCs with each visit



(continued on page 3)

Now that you know the ABCs, add a D.
(continued)

to your healthcare team. At the same time, take steps to keep your numbers as close as possible to your targets. By taking care of your blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol, you'll improve your chances for living a long and healthy life!

Ten steps to help you reach your ABC target numbers:

1. Choose whole grains, vegetables and legumes (beans) and fruits to consume more fiber.
2. Stay at a healthy weight.
3. Eat less fat and salt.
4. Select oils and soft margarine rather than butter and hard fats such as shortening.
5. Be active every day; aim for 30 minutes a day.
6. If you smoke, stop.
7. Ask your doctor about taking aspirin daily.
8. Take all medications as prescribed.
9. Work with your physician to set and achieve your ABC goals.
10. Ask your family and friends for support as you take care of your diabetes and your heart.



**Warning signs
of a heart attack**

**Become familiar with
these signs and call 911
right away if they occur:**

- chest pain or discomfort
- pain or discomfort in your arms, back, jaw, neck, or stomach
- shortness of breath
- sweating or light-headedness
- indigestion or nausea
- tiredness

You may not experience all of these signs, and they may come and go. Chest pain that doesn't go away after resting a few minutes may signal a heart attack.

Medicare Part B patients: Call **1-877-231-5199** and mention reference code **ED06500** to order your diabetes testing supplies.
Web site: www.RxSolutions.com/diabetes

The information in this educational tool does not substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis or treatment of your physician. Always seek the help of your physician or qualified health provider for any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

Prescription Solutions is an affiliate of United HealthCare Insurance Company.