



## Taking Control of Diabetes



Similar to having heart disease, diabetes is a chronic condition that--while serious--should not deprive you of a long and fulfilling life. With that said, the things that you do on a day-to-day basis can end up making a huge difference in how the condition affects your health and quality of life.

This guide will help you become familiar with the essential diabetes management tools, so that you can go about your days confidently making choices that will bring you closer to achieving your personal health goals.

### Diabetes Management at a Glance

Firstly, what does it mean to self-manage your diabetes?

Effective self-management of diabetes means that you know how to:

- ❖ **Check your blood sugar** level when needed
- ❖ **Watch for symptoms** of diabetes and know what to do and when
- ❖ Follow a **healthy eating plan**
- ❖ Maintain regular **physical activity** and a healthy weight
- ❖ Effectively **manage stress** and emotions
- ❖ **Take your medications** properly and as prescribed

Over the course of this program, most these topics will be covered, so that soon you will be equipped with the skills you need to manage many of your chronic conditions, including diabetes.

### Knowing Your A-B-C's

When it comes to your diabetes, there are certain things that play a crucial role in determining how your condition changes over time. These are known as the **Diabetes A-B-C's**-- the 3 numbers that are important for you to know and keep track of:

#### **A - A1c ("Hemoglobin A1c" or "HbA1c"):**

- This is a measure of how well your blood sugars have been controlled over the past 3 months.
- For most people with diabetes, the goal is to keep the A1c **below 7%**

#### **B - Blood Pressure:**

- Goal is to keep BP **below 140/90** mmHg

#### **C - Cholesterol:**

- **LDL** (bad cholesterol) → under 100 mg/dl
- **HDL** (good cholesterol)
  - Men → above 40 mg/dl
  - Women → above 50 mg/dl
- **Triglycerides** → under 150 mg/dl

*Note:* The numbers provided above are general guidelines; your personal target depends on your overall health and may be lower or higher as determined by your physician.

## Low Blood Sugar (“Hypoglycemia”)

### What are the Symptoms?

- ✓ Shakiness, nervousness, anxiety
- ✓ Sweating, chills, clamminess
- ✓ Irritability, impatience, confusion
- ✓ Rapid and pounding heartbeat
- ✓ Lightheadedness, dizziness, nausea
- ✓ Sleepiness or weakness
- ✓ Blurred vision
- ✓ Tingling or numbness in the lips or tongue

### What Causes It?

- Skipping meals
- Waiting too long after taking your diabetes medicine to eat your meals
- Taking too much diabetes medicine
- Long periods of exercise with no snack
- Drinking alcohol without food

### If You Think Your Blood Sugar is Low:

1. Consume ½ cup of **simple carbohydrates**
2. Recheck your blood glucose after 15 minutes
3. If blood sugar level is still low (less than **70** mg/dl), repeat steps #1-3.
4. Once your blood glucose returns to normal, eat a small snack if your next planned meal or snack is more than an hour or two away.

### Examples of Simple Carbohydrates

- ❖ Glucose tablets
- ❖ Raisins
- ❖ Juice or regular soda (*not diet*)
- ❖ Sugar, honey, or corn syrup
- ❖ Nonfat or 1% milk
- ❖ Hard candies, jellybeans, or gumdrops

## Caring For Your Feet

When you have diabetes, minor skin issues can worsen quickly and result in serious complications. By following these simple steps to care for your feet, you can take control of your health by maintaining healthy skin and feet and prevent problems from ever happening in the first place.



### **1. Inspect your feet**

Check your feet and toes, inspecting the tops, sides, soles, heels, and the area in between the toes. If you're physically unable to inspect your own feet, use a **mirror** or ask someone to help. Contact your doctor immediately if you discover any **sores, redness, cuts, or blisters**.

### **2. Wash your feet**

Wash your feet every day in warm water with **mild soap**. Hot water and harsh soaps can damage your skin. **Check the water temperature** with your fingers or elbow before putting your feet in. Your diabetes may make it difficult to sense water temperature with your feet.

### **3. Dry your feet**

Pat your feet to dry them and make sure to dry well. Infections tend to develop in moist areas, so **make sure you dry the area between your toes well**.

### **5. Avoid walking barefoot, even when indoors**

Even walking barefoot around the house can cause sores that can get infected. **Protect your feet** by investing in some comfortable slippers.

### **4. Moisturize dry skin**

If the skin on your feet feels rough or dry, use lotion or oil. **Do not put lotion between your toes**.