



# THE POWER TO CONTROL DIABETES IS IN YOUR HANDS

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Information About Diabetes and  
Related Medicare Benefits

# What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a serious disease. It means your blood glucose (often called blood sugar) is too high. Your blood always has some glucose in it because your body needs it for energy, but too much glucose in your blood is not good for your health.

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## What does it mean to manage my diabetes?

It means that you can take steps to stay healthy and keep your ABCs (A1C (Average blood glucose), Blood pressure, and Cholesterol) close to normal. To manage diabetes you need to:

- make healthy food choices
- get 30 to 60 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week
- stay at a healthy weight
- take any medicines your doctor prescribes
- check your blood glucose as advised by your health care team



### Other self-care actions:

- Stop smoking. Ask for help to quit or call 1-800-QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669).
- Ask for help if you feel down or have trouble handling stress. A mental health counselor, support group, member of the clergy, friend, or family member who will listen to your concerns may help you feel better.
- Check your feet every day for cuts, blisters, red spots, and swelling. Call your health care team right away about any sores that do not go away.
- Brush your teeth and floss every day to avoid problems with your mouth, teeth, or gums.
- Report any changes in your eyesight to your doctor.
- Get regular check of your eyes, kidneys, and nerves.

**Make a self-care plan and review it with your health care team.**

## Why should I manage my diabetes?

If you manage your diabetes you may have more energy. Taking good care of yourself can also lower your chances of having heart, eye, kidney, and nerve problems.

## What diabetes numbers do I need to know?

You need to know your **A1C** (Average blood glucose), **blood pressure**, and **cholesterol** numbers (also called the ABCs). It is important that they stay within your target range to lower your risk for a heart attack or stroke.

**Ask your health care team what your ABC numbers and targets are. Keep track of your ABC numbers.**

## What are the ABCs of diabetes?

**A** is for **A1C**.

**The A1C goal for most people with diabetes is below 7%.** The A1C test is a simple blood test that reflects your average blood glucose over the past 3 months. You should have this test at least twice a year.

People who often have low blood glucose or people who have had a heart attack or are at high risk for a heart attack may need a higher A1C goal.

**B** is for **blood pressure**.

**The blood pressure goal for most people with diabetes is below 130/80.**

High blood pressure makes your heart work too hard. It can cause a heart attack, stroke, or kidney disease. You may need to check your blood pressure at home.

**C** is for **cholesterol**.

**The LDL cholesterol goal for most people with diabetes is below 100.**

Bad cholesterol, or LDL, can build up and clog your blood vessels. It can cause a heart attack or stroke.



## Should I check my blood glucose at home?

Checking your blood glucose will help you make sure it does not get too high or too low. It will help you and your doctor adjust your treatment plan for your needs. Ask your doctor if you need to check your blood glucose.

## How do I check my blood glucose?

You use a blood glucose meter (also called a monitor) and a lancing device (a tool to get a drop of blood) to check your blood glucose. The meter will read how much glucose is in your blood and give you a number. There are many types of meters. Some are made for people who have trouble seeing. Ask a member of your health care team to show you the right way to use your meter. Your team will help you decide when and how often to check your blood glucose.



**Be sure your health care team teaches you how to use your blood glucose meter. Ask how and when to test your blood glucose and how to use the results to manage your diabetes.**

## What should my blood glucose levels be?

Set your blood glucose targets with your health care team. The target range for most people is:

- Before meals: 70 to 130
- 1 to 2 hours after meals: below 180

## What should I do with the results when I check my blood glucose levels?

Write down all your blood glucose numbers in a log book. Make a note of things on the list below that seem to raise or lower your blood glucose. If your numbers are outside your target range your team may suggest changes to your meal plan, activity level, or medicines.



**Call your health care team if your blood glucose numbers are outside your target range for 2 to 3 days. Show your log to your health care team at every visit.**

## What can raise or lower my blood glucose levels?

Your blood glucose may get too high if you:

- Eat more than usual
- Eat foods high in sugar
- Exercise less than usual
- Have a lot of stress
- Have an infection or other illness
- Take certain medicines
- Do not take enough insulin or other diabetes medication

Your blood glucose may get too low if you:

- Eat less than usual
- Delay or skip a meal
- Exercise more than usual
- Take too much insulin or other diabetes medication

# Medicare for People with Diabetes

## What is Medicare?

Medicare is health insurance for people age 65 or older, under age 65 with certain disabilities, and any age with end-stage renal disease (permanent kidney failure requiring dialysis or a kidney transplant). People with diabetes who are eligible for Medicare can get the most from their Medicare benefits by learning about the types of services that are available. People with diabetes are encouraged to ask their health care team about the benefits they qualify for and visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) to get specific details from Medicare.

## What Benefits Does Medicare Offer for People with Diabetes?

People with diabetes enrolled in Medicare may be covered for all or part of the cost for:

- A “Welcome to Medicare” physical exam when they enroll
- A1C testing
- Cholesterol testing
- Diabetes self-management training to learn how to manage diabetes
- Medical nutrition therapy: nutrition assessments, diet management information, and nutrition counseling
- Diabetes equipment and supplies for self-monitoring of blood glucose, including special equipment for persons with low vision
- Foot exams by podiatrist or foot care specialist if medically necessary
- Therapeutic shoes and inserts if medically necessary
- A dilated eye exam and glaucoma screening
- Flu and pneumonia shots
- Diabetes medications
- Insulin pumps
- Kidney function tests
- Counseling to stop smoking





## What Benefits Does Medicare Offer for People At Risk for Diabetes?

People enrolled in Medicare who are at risk for type 2 diabetes may be covered for all or part of the cost for:

- A “Welcome to Medicare” physical exam when they enroll
- Yearly diabetes screening for people who are at risk for diabetes and twice yearly screening for people diagnosed with pre-diabetes. People are considered at risk if they have any of the following: high blood pressure, history of abnormal cholesterol and triglyceride levels, obesity, or a history of high blood glucose.
- Cholesterol screening – every five years

## Points to Keep in Mind:

- Make a self-care plan and review it with your health care team.
- Learn your ABCs: A1C (Average blood glucose), blood pressure, and cholesterol. Keep track of your numbers.
- Ask your health care team if you need to check your own blood glucose levels. If so, learn the right way to use your blood glucose meter. Keep track of your numbers in a log. Discuss your results at each diabetes care visit.
- Ask your health care team about the Medicare benefits you qualify for. Contact Medicare for more details.



## Here are some questions to ask your health care team:

- What are my A1C, blood pressure, and cholesterol numbers? What are my targets?

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- Should I check my blood glucose? If so, when, and how often?

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- What is the correct way to use my meter?

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- What is my blood glucose target range?

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What should I do if my readings are too high or too low?

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Do I qualify for any Medicare benefits such as diabetes self-management training or medical nutrition therapy services?

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Are there classes to help me learn more about how to manage my diabetes?

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How should I take care of my feet?

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Doctor's name and phone number

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## To learn more, contact:

### **National Diabetes Education Program**

1-888-693-NDEP (6337)

[www.YourDiabetesInfo.org](http://www.YourDiabetesInfo.org)

### **American Association of Diabetes Educators**

1-800-338-3633

[www.diabeteseducator.org](http://www.diabeteseducator.org)

### **American Diabetes Association**

1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383)

[www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)

### **American Dietetic Association**

1-800-877-1600

[www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)

### **American Heart Association**

1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721)

[www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

[www.cdc.gov/diabetes](http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes)

### **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services**

1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227),

in English and Spanish

TTY/TDD 1-877-486-2048 (TTY/TDD)

[www.medicare.gov/health/diabetes.asp](http://www.medicare.gov/health/diabetes.asp)

[www.medicare.gov/caregivers](http://www.medicare.gov/caregivers)

### **National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute**

301-592-8573

[www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)

### **National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse**

1-800-860-8747

[www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov)

### **National Kidney Disease Education Program**

1-866-4-KIDNEY (1-866-454-3639)

[www.nkdep.nih.gov](http://www.nkdep.nih.gov)





The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) is jointly sponsored by the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention with the support of more than 200 partner organizations.  
1-888-693-NDEP (6337) TTY: 1-866-569-1162 [www.YourDiabetesInfo.org](http://www.YourDiabetesInfo.org)

This booklet was reviewed for technical accuracy by Linda Haas, Ph.C., R.N., C.D.E., Endocrinology Clinical Nurse Specialist, Department of Veterans Affairs Puget Sound Health Care System, Seattle Division, and Sandra Burke, Ph.D., R.N., C.N.P., C.D.E., B.C.-A.D.M., Clinical Assistant Professor and Associate Director Central Illinois Regional Program UIC College of Nursing.

Participants in research studies can play a more active role in improving their own health and help others by contributing to health-related research.  
See [www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov) and [www.cdc.gov/diabetes/projects/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/projects/index.htm).