

Take Charge of Your Diabetes



Get More Information About Diabetes on the Web:

American Diabetes Association
www.diabetes.org

National Diabetes Education Program
ndep.nih.gov/i-have-diabetes/

San Francisco Health Plan
Diabetes Education Materials
[www.sfhf.org/members/health-wellness/
health-education-library/](http://www.sfhf.org/members/health-wellness/health-education-library/)





What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease that causes your blood glucose, also called blood sugar, to be too high.

- Your body changes most of the food you eat into sugar (glucose). Your body makes insulin which helps the sugar (glucose) to get into the body's cells.
- When you have diabetes, your body either doesn't make enough insulin, or your body can't use its own insulin very well.

There are three types of diabetes:

- **Type 1 diabetes:** your body does not produce enough insulin.
- **Type 2 diabetes:** your body cannot produce and use insulin properly.
- **Gestational diabetes:** this type of diabetes can develop in the mother in the second half of pregnancy. If you have had gestational diabetes, your risk of developing diabetes after pregnancy may be higher.

Diabetes has a big impact on your health

If you have diabetes, sugar levels in your blood are too high. Over time, having high blood sugar can lead to major problems with your heart, nerves, kidneys, eyes, and blood vessels. Diabetes can also cause you to get infections more often. Two of the biggest problems caused by diabetes are heart attacks and stroke. You can work with your doctor and care team to prevent these problems (see p.4 - Taking Charge of Your Diabetes).

When you have diabetes, high blood sugar may cause one or more of the following symptoms:

- Losing weight, especially if you are not trying to lose weight.
- Feeling very tired.
- Urinating often.
- Blurry vision.
- Feeling irritable.



Please call your doctor or health care provider if you are having these symptoms. It may mean that your blood sugar is not well controlled.

Be Prepared: If you have diabetes, you should wear an alert bracelet that emergency medical staff can find. You should always carry a sugar source, such as glucose tablets or raisins. Signs and symptoms of a diabetic emergency can include:

Severe Hyperglycemia (very high blood sugar)

- Flushed face.
- Dry skin and mouth.
- Nausea or throwing up.
- Stomach pain.
- Deep, rapid breathing.
- Fruity breath odor.
- High ketones in urine.

Severe Hypoglycemia (very low blood sugar)

- Weakness.
- Shaking.
- Sweating.
- Headache.
- Hunger.



If you think you are having symptoms of very high or very low blood sugar, **call 911!**

Taking Charge of Your Diabetes

Diabetes is a lifelong condition. But by taking action, you can live a healthy life and help prevent the complications of diabetes.

The best way to take care of yourself when you have diabetes is to work with your health care team to keep your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels in a healthy range. See Step 5: Get all of your screening tests on p.10 for more about these tests.

Lifestyle changes are important. Even small changes can make a big difference in helping you manage your blood sugar, stay healthy, and prevent complications of diabetes. Here are seven steps you can take to take charge of your diabetes:

1. Be more physically active.
2. Stay at a healthy weight & make healthy food choices.
3. Quit smoking.
4. Take the right diabetes medicine.
5. Get all of your screening tests.
6. Take care of your feelings.
7. Make an action plan.



STEP 1 Be More Physically Active

Moving your body can have a big impact on your health. Exercise can help you to:

- Lower your blood sugar and your blood pressure.
- Lower your risk for heart disease and stroke.
- Keep your heart and bones strong.
- Help you lose weight.
- Give you more energy.
- Lower your stress level.
- Lower your bad cholesterol (LDL) and raise your good cholesterol (HDL).

Find activities that work for you. Here are some ideas:

- Stand instead of sitting while you talk on the phone.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Take a brisk walk with a friend.
- Get off the bus or train one stop early and walk.
- Dance at home, or go to a dance class.
- Do tai chi or yoga.
- Go for a bike ride or ride a stationary bike.
- Lift small weights while watching TV.

For most people, it's best to aim for 30 minutes of activity a day, at least 5 days a week. If you are not very active, start out with 5 or 10 minutes a day, and work up to more time each week. You can also split up your activity for the day: take a quick 10-minute walk after each meal instead of 30 minutes all at once.

STEP 2 Stay at a Healthy Weight & Make Healthy Food Choices

Being overweight or obese with diabetes raises your risk of health problems. You don't have to lose a lot of weight to start seeing results. Losing just 10-15 pounds can help you feel better and get healthier. There are many types of weight loss plans to choose from. Talk with your health care team to find a plan that will work for you. You may think a healthy diet for a person with diabetes is complex. But it is mostly the same as a healthy diet for a person without diabetes. Choosing healthy foods helps you to:

- Keep your blood sugar in your goal range.
- Feel good each day.
- Lose weight (if you need to).
- Lower your risk for heart disease, stroke, and other problems caused by diabetes.

Use the Plate Method Most Days:

- Non-Starchy Vegetables – half of your plate (spinach, bok choy, broccoli, green beans, salad).
- Whole Grains and Starches – a quarter of your plate (brown rice, oats, corn tortillas, whole wheat bread).
- Lean Protein – a quarter of your plate (seafood, chicken, eggs, beans, tofu).
- Fruit (1 small apple, banana, or orange).
- Dairy (1 cup of milk or yogurt, or 2 ounces of cheese).
- Healthy fats (olive or canola oil, avocado, nuts).
- Watch your portions by using a smaller plate.



Ok to Eat and Drink Occasionally, in Small Amounts:

- Chicken skin, red meat, processed meats (like ham, bacon, and sausage).
- Butter, whole milk, and cream.
- Cakes, cookies, and other baked goods.
- Coffee and tea with caffeine.
- Alcohol.

Avoid:

- Sweet drinks like sodas, sugary tea, or juice.
- Processed foods (chips, instant noodles, fast food, packaged sweets).
- Fried foods (french fries, chicken nuggets, crispy tacos).

Other Healthy Eating Tips:

- Make time to eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner (with a snack if you need it) each day.
- Try not to eat meals too close together, or snack a lot during the day. It can make your blood sugar levels too high.
- Water is the best drink choice. It tastes great when you flavor it with fresh fruit, mint, or cucumber slices. Try having a glass before you eat, and a sip between each bite.
- If you're still hungry after eating, have some more non-starchy veggies. Foods like asparagus, carrots, or tomatoes won't raise your blood sugar.
- Eat slowly. It takes a while for your body to feel full. Wait a few minutes before getting a second serving. You may find you no longer want it.
- Make your plate colorful. Avoid white foods and have a variety of green, red, purple, orange, and yellow at each meal. These foods have important nutrients and help keep your blood sugar down.



STEP 3 Quit Smoking

Smoking and other tobacco use puts people with diabetes at much higher risk. Smoking raises your blood sugar, cholesterol, and blood pressure. If you quit smoking, you will lower your risk for heart attack, stroke, nerve disease, kidney disease, and mouth disease.

Once you decide to quit smoking, there are lots of things you can do to raise your chances of staying tobacco-free. Here are some tips:

- **Talk to your healthcare provider about quitting.**

Your care team can connect you to resources like classes and support groups.

- Your provider can also prescribe free **Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)** that you can pick up at the pharmacy. NRT can come in the form of patches, gum, lozenges, spray, and inhalers.

- **Call the California Smokers' Quitline at 1-800-NO BUTTS** to get help with quitting! Their counselors are experts in helping people with the process. **You can also visit www.nobutts.org.**

- **Get 24/7 help on your smartphone.** Free apps like QuitGuide and quitSTART can give you the support and skills to help you quit for good. SmokefreeTXT can send you text messages with quitting tips. Find out more at www.smokefree.gov.

- **Reach out to family and friends for support.** Tell your family and friends about your plan to quit and ask for their help. Convince a friend or spouse to quit with you.



STEP 4 Take the Right Diabetes Medicine

People with type 1 diabetes must use insulin. Some people with type 2 diabetes can manage their diabetes with healthy eating and exercise. Many people take pills and/or insulin to help meet target blood sugar levels. Talk to your provider about what diabetes medicine is right for you.

Things to remember about your diabetes medicine:

- Take your medicine exactly as your doctor tells you to.
- Keep track of all of your medications. There is a chart on p.20 where you can list all of the medications you are taking.
- Make sure that you have enough medicine each month. Call your pharmacy or health care provider to check that you will get your refill on time, and not run out of medicine.
- Here are some tips to help remind you to take your medicine:
 - Set a timer or alarm on your phone.
 - Use a pill organizer box.
 - Place a reminder somewhere you look everyday (such as near your toothbrush).



STEP 5 Get all of your Screening Tests

When you have diabetes, it is important to get regular tests and screenings. Going over your test results gives your care team information to help keep your diabetes in control.

These are the common tests you may need:

- **A1c:** The A1c test (hemoglobin A1c or HbA1c) is a blood test done by your provider at least twice a year. It helps your provider see how your blood sugar has been over the past three months. Most people with diabetes should aim for an A1c **less than 7%**

(a higher number means higher blood sugar levels). Some people with diabetes should aim for a lower A1c or higher A1c. Talk to your provider about what level is right for you.



- **Blood Sugar:**

Checking your blood sugar (glucose) often is the main tool you have to know if your diabetes is in control. Talk to your doctor about getting a free prescription for a glucose meter that will help you track your blood sugar at home. Keep a log of your blood sugar levels and share it with your provider at your next visit.



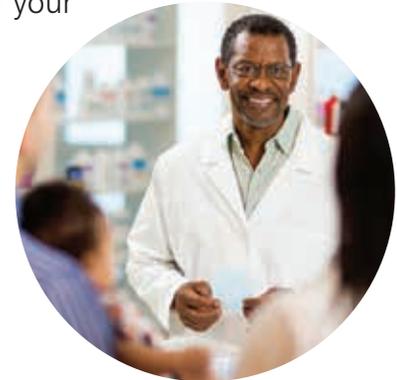
- **Blood Pressure:** Blood pressure is the force of blood against the arteries when the heart beats and rests. Having high blood pressure with diabetes can lead to problems with your heart, eyes, and kidneys.

Most people should aim for a blood pressure of **less than 140/90 mm Hg**. Get your blood pressure checked at each provider visit. If it is high, you can work with your provider to make lifestyle changes and/or start medication to lower it.

- **Eye Health:** People with diabetes are more likely to have eye problems that can lead to blindness. Diabetes weakens the body's blood vessels. The blood vessels of the eyes are small, and when they become weak, they can leak, burst, or become blocked. Many of these eye problems can be stopped or delayed by taking care of your diabetes. It is also important to get your eyes checked by the doctor at least once a year. Call VSP to find an eye doctor near you at **1(800) 877-7195**.



- **Foot Health:** People with diabetes are more likely to have problems with their feet. These problems can lead to bad infections of the foot. It is vital to notice and treat foot problems early, to avoid worse problems. Take care of your feet. Wash your feet daily, trim toenails with care, and check the feet for signs of wounds or infection each day. If you cannot see the bottom of your feet, use a hand mirror. Wear proper shoes and check for any wrinkles in your socks before putting on your shoes. Do not walk barefoot.



- **Cholesterol:** Having a high LDL (low-density lipoprotein, the bad type of cholesterol) cholesterol level can clog your blood vessels and raise your chance for a heart attack or stroke. Cholesterol is a soft, waxy substance in the blood and the body's cells. The goal for most people is **less than 100 mg/dL**. People with diabetes who are between 40-75 years old should be on a statin drug to cut the risk of heart attack. Like with blood pressure, changing your lifestyle can help lower your bad cholesterol.



STEP 6 Take Care of Your Feelings

Taking care of your emotional health is just as important as taking care of your physical health. Often it can be helpful to talk with a professional counselor about emotional ups and downs in your life, especially if they start to get worse and take a toll on you.

Each person's diabetes experience is unique, but there are some feelings that many people with diabetes go through at one time or another:

- Fear and worry (about the future and about your health).
- Loss of control (I will never get a handle on this).
- Denial (this cannot be happening to me, I'm not sick).
- Anger (it is not fair, my body is turning against me).
- Guilt (I must have done something to make this happen).
- Feeling shame (what will others think?).

Find ways to manage stress in your life. Stress is part of daily life. But stress can have a big impact on diabetes.

Stress hormones can increase your blood sugar level. When you are stressed you may eat more, drink more alcohol, or exercise less.

- As much as possible, try to **avoid situations that trigger stress** for you.
- **Try to be positive.** What you think, how you think, what you expect, and what you tell yourself often decide how well you manage rising stress levels.
- **Talk with someone** about your problems. Reach out to friends and family for support.
- If you cannot resolve these stressors alone, **get professional help.**



Take an active role in taking care of yourself.

Making healthy lifestyle changes can help improve your diabetes.

- **Get some exercise** and move your body on most days of the week! It is a great way to burn off the effects of stress—walking, dancing, yoga, and stretching are good activities.
- **Get enough sleep.** It can help your immune system stay strong and help your mood, so you can feel happier and less stressed. Most people need 7 or 8 hours a night. Try to go to bed and wake up at about the same time every day, even on weekends.
- **Eat healthy food as often as possible.**

See the healthy eating tips on page 6.

Learn and practice relaxation exercises. Relaxation exercises are simple to do and combine deep breathing, releasing of muscle tension, and clearing of negative thoughts. You can try:

- Repetitive phrases - repeat a phrase that triggers a physical relaxation, such as "Relax and Let Go."
- Imagery - use your imagination to picture a person, place, or time that makes you feel relaxed, peaceful and happy.



Free Resources for SFHP Members:

Professionals are available to help you manage these kinds of issues in your life. You can find free services in your area to help you get back on track and feel better.

Medi-Cal Members – Call Beacon Health Strategies at 1(855) 371-8117.

Healthy Kids HMO and Healthy Workers HMO – Call San Francisco Community Behavioral Health Services (CBHS) at 1(888) 246-3333.

Make an Action Plan

Fill out the form below and bring it to your next appointment with your health care provider.

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Goal: What do you <u>want</u> to do? | | | | | | | | | | | |
| When will you do it (day of week/time of day)? | | | | | | | | | | | |
| For how long will you do it (minutes or number of times)? | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Where will you do it? | | | | | | | | | | | |
| How confident are you, on a scale of 0 to 10 (0=not at all confident, 10=totally confident)? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| If you are below a 7, you may want to change something in your plan so you will get to a 7 and have success! | | | | | | | | | | | |

How Are You Doing?

Fill out the form below and bring it to your next appointment with your health care provider.

| Over the past two weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems? | Not at all | Some days | More than half the days | Nearly every day |
|--|------------|-----------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Little interest or pleasure in doing things. | | | | |
| Feeling down, depressed or hopeless. | | | | |

Rate Your Health!

Fill out the form below and bring it to your next appointment with your health care provider.

| Life with Diabetes Questions | Yes | No | Sometimes | I don't know | |
|---|-----|----|-----------|--------------|---|
| Do you know how to manage your diabetes? | | | | | |
| Do you see your provider regularly to help manage your diabetes? | | | | | |
| Do you take your medicine exactly as your provider advises? If not, what gets in the way? Explain here: | | | | | |
| Do you have family or friends that can help you manage your health? | | | | | |
| Do you have any cultural or religious values that affect your care? | | | | | |
| Do you have any problems with keeping your provider's visits? If yes, what gets in the way? Explain here: | | | | | |
| Do you have a car or access to MUNI/BART or other transportation? | | | | | |
| Are you interested in going to classes to help you handle your diabetes better? | | | | | |
| What worries you most about your diabetes? | | | | | |
| There may be changes you could make in your life to improve your health. On a scale of 1-5, where would you place yourself on being ready to make these changes? (1 is not even thinking about it, and 5 is already doing it) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Keep Track of Your Medicines

Make a list of all the prescription and non-prescription medicines you are currently taking and show it to your health care provider.

My medicines:

| | |
|----|--|
| 1 | |
| 2 | |
| 3 | |
| 4 | |
| 5 | |
| 6 | |
| 7 | |
| 8 | |
| 9 | |
| 10 | |
| 11 | |
| 12 | |

Questions to Ask Your Provider

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | |
| 2 | |
| 3 | |
| 4 | |
| 5 | |
| 6 | |

For more information, call San Francisco Health Plan Customer Service at **1(415) 547-7800** or visit **sfhp.org**



Resources

American Association of Diabetes Educators
www.diabeteseducator.org

American Diabetes Association
1(800) 342-2383
www.diabetes.org

Diabetes-friendly recipes:
www.diabetes.org/mfa-recipes/recipes

American Heart Association
Oakland office: 1(510) 903-4050
www.heart.org/conditions

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1(800) 232-4636
www.cdc.gov/diabetes

Medline Plus/National Institutes of Health
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/diabetes.html

Learning about Diabetes
www.learningaboutdiabetes.org

San Francisco Health Plan Customer Service:
1(800) 288-5555

Health and wellness information: sfhp.org/members

