

# Diabetic Care Guidelines

By Allen Smith, eHow User



One of the most important things that newly diagnosed diabetics need to learn is how to monitor their blood glucose throughout the day. High concentrations of blood glucose can lead to other conditions that include kidney damage, atherosclerosis, retinopathy and damage to fingers and toes that can result in the loss of limb. But diabetics also need to learn how to manage their blood pressure, diet, weight and how to add [exercise](#) to their daily routine. Here's how to get started.

## Managing Blood Pressure

According to the National Kidney and Urologic Diseases Information Clearinghouse, over 44 percent of diabetics experience kidney failure due to high blood sugar and high blood pressure.

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute recommends that diabetics maintain their blood pressure below 130/80. High blood pressure can be managed by a combination of heart-healthy [foods](#), losing weight, getting more exercise and taking prescribed medications for high blood pressure. Other ways to manage high blood pressure include quitting smoking and lowering stress through yoga and meditation techniques.

## Eating a Heart Healthy Diet

Diabetics are typically at high risk for atherosclerosis and coronary artery disease. Both result from the accumulation of calcified plaque on the inside of arteries as a result of too much cholesterol circulating in the blood.

According to the American Heart Association, diabetics should reduce their daily intake of cholesterol to less than 200 mg per day. The best way to begin reducing cholesterol intake is to become an informed and educated consumer. By reading the labels on the side of packages, diabetics can learn which foods are higher than others in cholesterol and begin making changes to their diet. Begin slowly by making easier exchanges of foods high in cholesterol for those that are low in cholesterol and saturated fat. For instance, instead of a high cholesterol breakfast of bacon, eggs and toast with butter, try exchanging your eggs with Eggbeaters, a low cholesterol alternative to egg yolks. Start using alternatives to butter like Shedd's Willow Run Soybean Margarine. For the biggest improvement, try a breakfast of wholegrain cereal with fresh strawberries and nonfat milk.

Diabetics also need to pay strict attention to how their diet impacts their blood glucose levels. Foods that are rich in carbohydrates should be balanced with others that contain protein and fat. Pay attention to the glycemic index of foods. The glycemic index, or GI, makes reference to how quickly carbohydrates raise blood glucose levels. Avoid eating foods with a high glycemic index or balance them with low GI foods.

## Losing Weight

Obesity can exacerbate diabetes and lead to a number of secondary complications like high blood pressure, foot, ankle and knee problems.

The easiest way to begin losing weight is to make a goal to lose one pound per week for 10 weeks. Each pound of body fat contains 3500 calories. The best way to approach losing weight is through a combination of diet and exercise. Follow the dietary suggestions above and add 30 to 45 minutes of daily aerobic exercise to your daily routine. After several months, begin introducing light to moderate weight training to replace fat with metabolically active muscle.

## Getting More Exercise

Even if you don't belong to an expensive gym, it's easy to expend extra calories through a regular exercise program. According to the American [College](#) of Sports Medicine, adults should get a minimum of 20 minutes of exercise every day. If you're short on time, the 20 minutes can be broken up into two segments. Make a commitment with your family and friends to begin each day with a 20-minute walk. See if you can get a group of friends or neighbors to join you. People who exercise in groups have much better adherence rates to exercise than those who try to do it on their own. Make a few fitness goals to strive for. For instance, set a goal to complete a 5K or 10K by the end of summer. Or, try a century ride on your bicycle. It helps to have goals to achieve.

Diabetics on medication need to pay particular attention to how exercise affects their blood glucose levels. Use a portable blood glucose monitor and test your glucose levels before and after exercise. Avoid exercising at the time when your medication is at its peak time. If you're injecting insulin, avoid injecting it into muscles groups that will become active during exercise.

## Other Considerations

Many diabetics have secondary conditions that affect their life. They can suffer from vision impairment and limited circulation in their feet, toes and fingers.

Diabetics whose sight has been affected by unmanaged diabetes need to take extra care when walking. Loss of depth perception caused by retinopathy can lead to serious falls and accidents. Diabetics also suffer from poor circulation.

Something as simple as a cut or blister can become infected and ultimately lead to the loss of a limb. Because they may have lost the ability to feel pain, they need to keep their hands and feet clean throughout the day and inspect them periodically.

## Resources

- [Diabetes Care Guidelines for Older Adults](#)
- [National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute](#)
- [American College of Sports Medicine](#)