



ABCs of Diabetes Care



Staying healthy when you have diabetes can be challenging. But the more you focus on the positive results of a healthy diet, medication routine and regular exercise, the easier it will be to keep your blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol in good control.

This booklet will help you understand three parts of your diabetes management and the self-care behaviors that will help meet your health goals in each area. It's as easy as learning your ABCs!

By knowing and controlling your **A** (A1C), **B** (Blood Pressure), and **C** (Cholesterol), you can stay healthy, achieve your goals, and live well with diabetes.

What are the ABCs?

A is for **A1C**

A1C is a blood test that measures an individual's average blood sugar or blood glucose levels over the last 2–3 months. A1C is a percentage, often ranging from 4-12. High A1C results put you at risk for future health problems.

Another way to express this average is called estimated average glucose (eAG). The difference is that it's written in mg/dL (the same number you see when you check your blood glucose on your home monitor) instead of a percentage.

Your healthcare provider will work with you to set an A1C/eAG goal specifically for you. However, the American Diabetes Association recommends that most people with diabetes aim for an A1C of less than 7.0 (eAG of 154) and the American Academy of Endocrinologists and the American Association of Diabetes Educators (AADE) recommend an A1C of 6.5 or lower (eAG of 140). This will help you remain healthy and reduce your risk for complications of diabetes.

My A1C _____

My Goal A1C _____



B is for **Blood Pressure**

Blood pressure—As your heart pumps blood through your body, pressure is applied to the inside walls of your blood vessels. If you have high blood pressure, your heart is working harder than it should—and this can cause health problems.

Blood pressure is easily measured at the doctor's office or with a home blood pressure monitor. For most people with diabetes, blood pressure should be less than 130/80mmHg. High blood pressure increases your risk for stroke, heart attack and kidney disease. It is important to take action to get your blood pressure in control.

My Blood Pressure _____

My Goal Blood Pressure _____

C is for Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a form of fat that can build up in your blood, putting you at an increased risk for heart attacks and strokes. It has three parts that can be measured: low density lipoproteins or LDL, high-density lipoproteins or HDL, and triglycerides.

Levels of LDL, the “bad” cholesterol, that are too high can lead to a buildup of cholesterol in your arteries. HDL, or “good” cholesterol, helps remove cholesterol from your blood. High triglycerides (a form of fat that floats in the blood along with cholesterol) may increase your risks as well. It’s important that all parts of your cholesterol are within healthy levels.

For most people with diabetes, cholesterol goals are:

LDL – less than 100 mg/dL

HDL – greater than 40 mg/dL for men and 50 mg/dL for women

Triglycerides – less than 150 mg/dL





Be sure to discuss your individual cholesterol goals with your care team.

	My Current Levels (mg/dL)	My Goal Levels (mg/dL)
LDL	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
HDL	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Triglycerides	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

AADE7 Self-Care Behaviors

The American Association of Diabetes Educators has identified **seven** self-care behaviors, called the AADE7™ that will help you manage your blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol—and live a healthier life with diabetes.

1

Healthy Eating

If you have diabetes, you do not have to give up your favorite foods. But you will need to pay attention to how much you eat, when you eat, and what effect food has on your health goals.

How can what you eat affect your ABCs?

A1C: The types of food you eat, how much and when you eat them all affect the amount of glucose in your blood. By learning to eat regular meals, making healthy food choices, watching your portion sizes, and monitoring your blood glucose levels, you can decrease your A1C/eAG over time!

There are three main types of nutrients in food: carbohydrates, proteins and fats. A healthy meal will include

all three types, but it is especially important to control the amount of carbohydrates you eat because they raise your blood glucose more than the other two.

Carbohydrates are foods such as: bread, rice, pasta, fruits, cereals, grains, starchy vegetables (like potatoes, corn, squash and dry beans), candy, cookies, baked goods and sweet beverages. All of these foods have an effect on your blood glucose.

Meats, like poultry, beef and pork, and cheese, as well as fats and oils and non-starchy vegetables have very little effect on your blood sugar. Try to balance high carbohydrate-containing foods with those that do not contain many carbohydrates.





Blood Pressure: Foods higher in salt (sodium) may raise your blood pressure. Try to reduce the sodium in your food choices using these tips:

- Use herbs and spices to flavor your foods instead of adding table salt. Reduce your use of salt (sodium) to no more than 2,300 mg of sodium each day.
- Read food labels to choose foods that are lower in sodium and added fats. Avoid canned, processed, convenience and fast foods that are generally higher in sodium than fresh foods.
- Choose vegetables and fruits more often—they are naturally low in sodium.

Cholesterol: Foods high in animal fats (saturated fats) tend to raise your levels of bad (LDL) cholesterol. To lower the amount of saturated fat in your meals:

- Trim visible fat off of meats and remove the skin from chicken before cooking.
- Use liquid oil in cooking—like canola or olive oil, which are high in healthier mono-unsaturated fats.
- Choose skim or 1% milk and reduced-fat cheeses. Whole milk and high-fat cheeses have lots of cholesterol-raising animal fats.
- Choose foods high in fiber like whole grain breads and cereals, fruits and vegetables (leave the peels on). Dry beans and peas are also high in fiber.

SELF-CHECK

Why is it important to eat healthy meals?

What is one thing you can do today that will make your meals healthier?

Being Active

Regular physical activity can help you feel strong, improve your insulin sensitivity, reduce your blood glucose levels and improve your cholesterol and blood pressure. Before you begin, ask your healthcare provider to assess your current fitness level and help you set some exercise goals. They don't have to be huge goals—just adding more physical activities to your daily routine will help you stay healthy.

Here are some first steps to take:

- Create an activity plan based on your needs and abilities. If you are exercising mainly to lose weight or maintain a healthy weight, increase your amount of physical activity and work up to 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week.
- Recruit a friend, family member or co-worker to exercise with you for support and motivation.
- Start moving! Start with something easy like walking for 10 minutes a few days a week, and slowly build from there. If you have a hard time standing or keeping your balance, try chair, bed or floor exercises to increase your strength and flexibility.

- Try something new. Try yoga, hula hoop, salsa dancing, bike riding, or take a class at a community center or local gym. If you are exercising at home, try exercise DVDs or follow along with exercise shows on television.
- Measure your progress. Keep a record of your efforts. Review your short- and long-term accomplishments to make changes if needed. Reward your achievements and keep yourself motivated.

SELF-CHECK

Name one activity that you might enjoy doing more often.

What can you do today to get started?





3

Monitoring

Keeping track of your blood glucose levels and knowing your other health numbers is important for diabetes management. If glucose monitoring is new to you, talk with your diabetes educator about how and when to check your blood glucose, and what to do when it's too high or low.

Your ABCs need watching too, and it's important to keep track of your numbers in each area so that you know your target goals and how well you are doing.

A1C: For most people with diabetes, this test should be done every 3–6 months. Remember to

continue regularly checking your blood glucose as recommended by your care team.

Blood Pressure: Be sure your blood pressure is checked at every visit with your care team. If you have high blood pressure, your healthcare provider may suggest that you take blood pressure readings at home in between your regular appointments.

Cholesterol: This test is done every 6 months to 1 year. It should be part of your annual diabetes check, even if your numbers were previously healthy.

SELF-CHECK

Which one of your ABC numbers are you most concerned about and why?

What can you do today that will help you monitor this area of your diabetes care?

4

Taking Medications

There are several types of medications for people with diabetes—insulin, pills to help manage your blood sugar, blood pressure medications, cholesterol-lowering medications, and others that may work together to help you lower your blood sugar levels, reduce your risk of complications and help you feel better.

Medications can be prescribed in each one of the ABC areas, but they are only effective if you take them the correct way and at the right times. It's important to know the names, doses and instructions for the medications you're taking, as well as the reasons they were prescribed for you.

SELF-CHECK

Do you ever forget to take your medication or skip it on purpose?

How can you change this in the future?





5

Problem Solving

Everyone encounters problems with their diabetes control; you can't plan for every situation you may face. However, there are some problem-solving skills that can help you prepare for the unexpected:

- When you have a special occasion, such as a holiday, wedding, or going out to eat, check out what will be on the menu. Plan what you will eat ahead of time.
- If you don't like to exercise outside during the winter, explore ways to be active indoors.
- Make a sick day plan before you get the flu. Keep numbers for your healthcare team handy in case of emergency.
- Make a plan for situations when alcohol will be served.
- Think of other situations in which you might feel out of control. Develop a way to deal with these ahead of time.

SELF-CHECK

How have you prepared for the unexpected in your diabetes management?

What can you do to prepare for hypoglycemia at home? At work? At a social activity?

Reducing Risks

Having diabetes increases your chances of developing other health problems, but you can prevent or delay the onset of complications by keeping your ABCs within your goal ranges.

If you have healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels, you are less likely to get heart disease. By paying close attention to your A1C, and taking action to keep it in a safe range, you can help keep your eyes, feet and kidneys healthy.

To help reduce your risk of complications:

- Don't smoke—if you do, seek help in quitting.
- See your care team on a regular basis—usually every 3–6 months.
- Visit an eye doctor, called an ophthalmologist, for a dilated eye exam once per year.
- Take care of your feet—ask your diabetes educator for information on foot care procedures. Your healthcare provider should do a complete foot exam every year.
- Check your blood sugar and blood pressure regularly. Report any results out of your goal range to your care team.
- Visit your dentist twice a year and remember to brush at least twice a day and to floss your teeth daily.
- Have your cholesterol and A1C checked regularly.

SELF-CHECK

Look at the list above. Which one of these things do you have trouble doing?

What is one thing that you can do today to reduce your risks?



Healthy Coping

Diabetes can affect you physically and emotionally. It is natural to have mixed feelings about your diabetes management and experience emotional highs and lows.

That's what healthy coping is all about—finding ways to acknowledge those negative feelings and deal with them in a way that will help you stay on track, or get back on track.

Here are some strategies to help you cope with the tough times in your diabetes self-management:

- Develop a support network. Be sure to develop and nurture relationships in your personal life.
- Go to group educational or support sessions where you can meet and relate to other people going through the same experiences.
- Talk to your doctor or educator if you feel down often, have changes in appetite or sleep, and don't feel like taking care of yourself.
- Do things that you enjoy—garden, talk with friends, read.

- Do something physical. Physical activity can positively influence your mood. If you are sad, anxious, stressed or upset, go for a walk, stand up and stretch, take a bicycle ride or do anything you can to move your body more—even in a chair. Exercise actually increases the chemicals in your brain that help make you feel good!

SELF-CHECK

How can you deal with stress in a positive way?

List three activities you enjoy doing that help you relax.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____



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