

Staying Healthy with Diabetes

Note to the Health Care Provider: Topics in this handout are discussed in Chapters 6 and 13 of the *American Dietetic Association Guide to Diabetes Medical Nutrition Therapy and Education* (1,2). The information on the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet is from reference 3.

When counseling clients about controlling blood glucose, blood pressure, and lipids, consider the following strategies:

- Analyzing trends in the client's A1C, blood pressure, and blood glucose levels. Clients may be improving control even if they are not yet at their target goals.
- Identifying other factors that may affect the client's heart health, such as tobacco use and/or inactivity.
- Reinforcing the importance of medical nutrition therapy, even when a client is using medications to control lipids, blood pressure, or blood glucose.

References

1. Holzmeister LA, Geil P. Evidence-based nutrition care and recommendations. In: Ross TA, Boucher JL, O'Connell BS, eds. *American Dietetic Association Guide to Diabetes Medical Nutrition Therapy and Education*. Chicago, IL: American Dietetic Association; 2005:61-70.
2. Wheeler ML. Long-term complications. In: Ross TA, Boucher JL, O'Connell BS, eds. *American Dietetic Association Guide to Diabetes Medical Nutrition Therapy and Education*. Chicago, IL: American Dietetic Association; 2005:139-145.
3. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. Your Guide to Lowering Your Blood Pressure with DASH. NIH Publication No. 06-4082. Originally Printed 1998. Revised April 2006. http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new_dash.pdf. Accessed October 8, 2007.

Staying Healthy with Diabetes

Learning About A1C, Blood Pressure, and Cholesterol



For people with diabetes, staying healthy includes checking your blood glucose and eating the right amount of food. To stay well, you also need to set A1C, blood pressure, and cholesterol goals and plan how to meet them.

Keeping your A1C, blood pressure, and cholesterol under control will help you:

- ◇ Feel better.
- ◇ Keep your heart, kidneys, nerves and eyes healthy.
- ◇ Do the things in life that you love!

A1C

An A1C test is a blood test that shows how well your blood glucose was controlled during the past two to three months. You should have an A1C test every three to six months.

For most people, the goal is to keep A1C below 7%. A1C greater than 7% increases the risk for diabetes complications.

Here are some tips to help you get your A1C within the target range:

- Follow your meal plan. If you don't have a meal plan or your plan is not working for you, talk to your registered dietitian (RD).
- Test your blood glucose regularly, at the times that your health care team suggests. Note how your glucose levels change with food, activity, medications, or insulin. Then learn how to make changes to keep your blood glucose at a healthy level. Your health care team can help you adjust your meal plan, activity levels, medications, or insulin.
- Take your medications and insulin as directed.
- Be physically active for 30 minutes a day, at least five days of the week. See the Physical Activity Choices box on the next page for some activities you could try.

Blood Pressure

Your health care team will check your blood pressure at each visit. **The goal for blood pressure is 130/80 mmHg or lower.** High blood pressure increases risk for strokes and heart disease.

To help keep your blood pressure in the target range, try these tips:

- Follow the DASH diet (see the DASH Your Way to Healthy Eating box).
- Stay active. Aim to get 30 minutes of physical activity a day, at least five days of the week.
- Stay at a healthy weight.
- Take medications as directed.
- Don't smoke.
- If you want to drink alcohol, talk with your health care team about how to do so safely.
 - Women should limit alcohol to one drink a day or less.
 - Men should limit alcohol to two drinks a day or less.
 - One drink is 5 ounces of wine, 12 ounces of beer, or 1½ ounces of liquor.

Physical Activity Choices

You don't have to go to the gym to be active. You can:

- Go for a walk.
- Ride a bike.
- Clean the house.
- Take a water exercise class.





DASH Your Way to Healthy Eating

- **Fill up on fruits and vegetables.** Have at least 2 cups of fruits and 2 cups of vegetables every day.
- **Go for whole grain.** Have at least three servings of whole grain foods every day. One serving is one slice of bread, 1 ounce of dry cereal, or ½ cup of cooked pasta or rice.
- **Make room for low fat or nonfat milk or yogurt.** Have 2 to 3 cups a day.
- **Eat small amounts of lean meat, fish, and chicken.** Have 4 to 6 ounces a day. (Three ounces is about the size of a deck of cards.) You can also eat cooked dry beans or peas instead of meat.
- **Add a little heart-healthy fat.** Good choices are nuts, seeds, and olive or canola oil. Have two to three servings a day. One serving is 1 teaspoon of oil, six almonds, or four pecan halves.
- **Shake the salt habit.** Try different seasonings and eat fewer processed foods.
- **Lighten up on sweets.** If you have a sweet tooth, keep the portion small (for example, ½ cup frozen yogurt or two small cookies) and eat sweets less often (have no more than one serving a day).
- **If you drink alcohol, enjoy it within limits.**

Cholesterol

Get a blood test to check your cholesterol once a year. This test will look for two types of cholesterol in your blood: **HDL** (also known as “good” cholesterol) and **LDL** (also known as “bad” cholesterol).

For most adults with diabetes, the goal for LDL cholesterol is less than 100 mg/dL. High LDL cholesterol increases risk for heart disease.

To get your LDL cholesterol within the target range:

- Choose foods that are low in saturated fat and contain no *trans* fat. Saturated fats are found in meats, butter, and high-fat milk and cheese. Foods made with hydrogenated oil contain *trans* fats. You may find *trans* fat in fried foods, snack foods, margarine, and vegetable shortening.
- Eat fewer foods that contain cholesterol. (It is found only in foods from animals such as meats, eggs, and milk.)
- Include a little liquid (polyunsaturated) fat or nuts in your diet. You may also use margarines that contain plant sterols.
- Eat plenty of foods that are high in soluble fiber. Soluble fiber is found in fruits, vegetables, dried beans, and some whole grains.
- Be physically active. Aim for 30 minutes of physical activity a day, at least five days a week.
- Stay at a healthy weight.
- Take medications as directed.

