



It's time for a little heart to heart

February is American Heart Month

MAGNACARESM

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It's the perfect time to underline the not-so-romantic relationship between diabetes and heart disease.

Diabetes and heart disease often go hand in hand, so it's important to learn how to protect your heart with lifestyle changes you can control.

Know diabetes by heart

High blood pressure and heart disease

Anyone can get high blood pressure. Most of the time, though, it's found in people who are older than 35. You're also more likely to have high blood pressure as a person living with diabetes. Why? Because over time, high blood sugar can damage blood vessels and the nerves that control your heart.* People living with diabetes are also more likely to have other conditions that raise the risk for heart disease, including:

- ♥ Too much low-density lipoproteins (LDL) "bad" cholesterol in your bloodstream can form plaque on damaged artery walls
- ♥ High triglycerides (a type of fat in your blood) and low high-density lipoproteins (HDL) "good" cholesterol or high LDL cholesterol is thought to contribute to hardening of the arteries.

Since none of these conditions has symptoms, you can have your doctor check your blood pressure and do simple blood tests to see if your LDL, HDL or triglyceride levels are high.

Here's what you can do to control your blood pressure

Because high blood pressure is so common, it's important to pay attention to blood pressure numbers and to try to keep them low. Here's how:



See your doctor for a checkup and get your blood pressure checked regularly. Know what's normal for you.



Choose nutritious foods that include lean proteins, fruits and veggies and whole grains. Avoid processed foods.



Exercise for at least 150 minutes each week.



Get to or stay at a healthy weight.



Be careful not to eat too much salt. Ask your doctor how much sodium is safe for you.



Don't use tobacco products. If you smoke, quit as soon as possible. Talk to your doctor about options. You can also go to [Smokefree.gov](https://www.smokefree.gov) for tips on quitting.



Manage your stress by doing calming activities like yoga or walking.

Always pay attention to your ABCs

The key to managing diabetes and your heart health is lifestyle choices. It's all about the ABCs.

A **A1C**
Get a regular A1C test to measure your average blood sugar over 2 to 3 months. Aim to stay in your target range as much as you can.

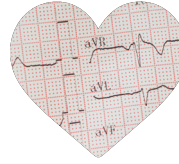
B **Blood pressure**
Try to keep your blood pressure below 140/90 mm Hg (or the target your doctor sets).

C **Cholesterol levels**
Manage your cholesterol levels.

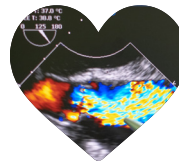
S **Stop smoking**
Stop smoking or don't start.

Love Your Heart

Make sure to get regular checkups to keep track of your heart health. Your blood pressure, weight and cholesterol levels will help your doctor understand your overall risk for heart disease. Your doctor may also recommend other tests to check your heart health, like an:



Electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG)
Measure your heart's electrical activity. Your heartbeat is the result of an electrical impulse traveling through your heart.



Echocardiogram (echo)
Evaluate how thick your heart muscle is and how well your heart pumps.



Exercise stress test (treadmill test)
Determine how well your heart functions when it's working hard.

Diabetes and heart failure

People living with diabetes are also more likely to experience heart failure. Heart failure is a serious condition, but it doesn't mean the heart has stopped beating. It means your heart can't pump blood efficiently, which can lead to swelling in your legs and fluid buildup in your lungs. This makes it hard to breathe. Heart failure tends to get worse over time, but early diagnosis and treatment can help relieve symptoms and stop or delay its worsening.

Struggling? Ask for help.

The most important thing to remember to help avoid health complications, like heart disease, is to reach out for extra support. Ask your doctor for a referral to a diabetes care and education specialist. It's another way you can give yourself the TLC you deserve!

