

Be Smart About Your Heart: Control the ABCs of Diabetes

Some people have “**pre-diabetes,**” which is when blood glucose levels are higher than normal but not in the diabetes range. People with this condition can reduce the risks of developing the diabetes by losing a small amount of weight and increasing their physical activity.

If you have diabetes, controlling your blood glucose levels will help prevent complications.

The ABCs of Diabetes

If you have diabetes, three key steps can help you lower your risk of heart attack and stroke. Follow these "ABCs":

- **A is for A1C test,** which is short for hemoglobin A1C. This test measures your average blood glucose (blood sugar) over the last 3 months. It lets you know if your blood glucose level is under control. Get this test at least twice a year.

Number to aim for: below 7.

- **B is for blood pressure.** The higher your blood pressure, the harder your heart has to work. Get your blood pressure measured at every doctor’s visit.

Numbers to aim for: below 120/80 mmHg.

- **C is for cholesterol.** "Bad" cholesterol, or LDL, builds up and clogs your arteries. Get your LDL cholesterol tested at least once a year.

Number to aim for: below 100 mg/dL.

Be sure to ask your health care provider:

- What are my ABC numbers?
- What should my ABC target numbers be?
- What actions should I take to reach my ABC target numbers?

To lower your risk of heart attack and stroke, also take these steps:

- Get physical activity every day.
- Eat less salt, cholesterol, and fat, especially saturated fat.
- Eat more fiber. Choose whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and beans.
- Stay at a healthy weight.
- If you smoke, stop.
- Take medicines as prescribed.
- Ask your doctor about taking aspirin.
- Ask others to help you manage your diabetes.