



If you have  
**Diabetes**

you are at risk for  
**Heart  
Disease**



**Ken Williams (Seneca) has diabetes and heart disease. He knows he can take steps to help his heart.**

## ***➤ Please, take care of your heart!***

Toni Williams' (Northern Arapaho) husband was just diagnosed with diabetes. Toni knows about diabetes. She is the Diabetes Coordinator for the Indian Walk-In Center in Salt Lake City, Utah. She has diabetes too. What was the first thing to come to Toni's mind when she found out her husband Ken (Seneca) had diabetes? "I was so worried about his heart," says Toni.

Toni knows the complications of diabetes. People who have the disease must take good care of their feet, eyes, kidneys, hearts, and teeth. Although all the complications worry her, it is heart disease that worries her the most.

"Your risk for heart disease is much greater if you have diabetes. A person with diabetes is at least twice as likely to have heart disease or a stroke as a person without diabetes," she explains.

Before Ken found out he had diabetes, he had two heart attacks. "They were sudden. He was flown by helicopter to the hospital. It was scary," remembers Toni.

Toni does not want this to happen again. She does not want others with diabetes to go through such a frightening experience. There are things you can do to take care of your heart. Find out as much as you can about heart disease. This is your first step to having a healthy heart. ❖



## Questions & Answers

# About Heart Disease

### What is heart disease?

Heart disease is a group of heart problems that includes heart attacks and heart failure. **Heart disease is the number one cause of death for Native Americans.**

### Who gets heart disease?

People with one or more risk factors are more likely to get heart disease than people who don't have any risk factors. Some risk factors cannot be changed and some can.

### What are risk factors that you cannot change?

These are the risk factors that you cannot change:

- Having diabetes.
- Being over age 40.
- Having family members with heart disease, especially a mother, father, brother, or sister who developed heart disease at a young age (under 55 for men and under 65 for women).

### What are risk factors that you can change?

These are the risk factors that you can change:

- Smoking or chewing tobacco.
- Having high blood pressure that is not controlled.
- Having high LDL cholesterol that is not treated.
- Being inactive.
- Being overweight.

### How can you reduce your risk?

There are things you can do to reduce your chances for getting heart disease:

- Don't smoke or chew tobacco.
- Keep blood pressure under control.
- Keep LDL cholesterol at healthy levels.
- Take aspirin if your health care provider prescribes it.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Be physically active.
- Lose weight if you are overweight.
- Find good ways to reduce stress.

### Should you take aspirin?

People who have heart disease or are at high risk for developing it may benefit from taking aspirin. But you should discuss this with your health care provider before taking aspirin.

### What about blood sugar?

Controlling blood sugar has some long term benefit for the heart. It has more benefit for the eyes, kidneys and nerves. Check your blood sugar and A1C as recommended by your health care provider.

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