

TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEART



Taking care of your heart is important when you have diabetes. People living with type 2 diabetes are two to four times more likely to develop heart disease, including heart attack.

There are ways to reduce your risk of heart disease.

How to take care of your heart

Be physically active

Regular physical activity can lower blood pressure and help reduce your risk of a heart attack and stroke. Aim to do at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most, if not all, days of the week. Check with your doctor before starting a physical activity program.

Make healthy food choices

Choose a wide variety of foods, including fruit, vegetables, wholegrains, lean meats and low-fat dairy foods. Include high-fibre, low glycemic index (GI) carbohydrate foods. It's also important to limit foods high in saturated fat and salt (sodium). Talk to a dietitian about the best food choices to reduce your risk of heart disease.

Keep blood fats (cholesterol and triglycerides) in the target range

Keeping cholesterol and triglyceride levels in the target range will reduce your risk of heart disease. As a guide aim for:

- Total cholesterol less than 4mmol/L
- LDL (bad) cholesterol less than 2mmol/L
- HDL (good) cholesterol 1mmol/L or above
- Triglycerides less than 2mmol/L

Your doctor may prescribe medications that can help manage your cholesterol and other risk factors for heart disease.

Manage high blood pressure

High blood pressure is common in people with diabetes, and it can more than double the risk of heart disease. Weight loss (if needed) and regular physical activity can help lower your blood pressure.

As a general guide the blood pressure target for people with diabetes is 130/80 or less. If you have existing cardiovascular or kidney disease your doctor will advise you on a blood pressure target to meet your individual health needs.

Your doctor may prescribe medications that can help manage your blood pressure and reduce the risk of heart disease and other diabetes-related complications.

If your weight is above the healthy weight range, try to lose weight

Carrying excess weight, especially around your waist, is a major risk factor for heart disease and is strongly linked to type 2 diabetes. Losing as little as 5-10% of your weight can reduce your risk of heart disease.

Don't smoke – if you do smoke try and quit

Smoking is a major risk factor for sudden cardiac death, and smokers who have diabetes double their risk of heart disease. If you feel you can't give up smoking on your own, ask for help – talk to your doctor or call the Quitline on 137 848.

How do you know if you have heart disease?

People often don't know they have heart disease until they develop symptoms. These include:

- > chest pain
- > shortness of breath
- > dizziness
- > arm or jaw discomfort
- > weakness
- > nausea.

If you display these symptoms seek urgent medical attention

If you have nerve damage, you may not notice many – or any – symptoms of heart disease.

The risk of developing heart disease is higher if you:

- > have high blood pressure
- > are above the healthy weight range or carrying extra weight around your waist
- > are a smoker
- > have a family history of heart disease.

Your doctor can assess your risk of developing heart disease.

More information

For more information about heart disease, talk to your doctor.