

Six Tests for Staying Healthy With Diabetes

There is a lot you and your healthcare team can do to reduce the risks for complications of diabetes. The most common complications may involve your heart, blood vessels, feet, eyes, kidneys and nerves. Keeping blood glucose levels in target range is only a first step. Controlling blood pressure and cholesterol is also important. Learn about the six tests or exams for staying healthy. Ask about your results.

A1C (or “hemoglobin A1c”)

What is it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A blood test • Average blood glucose over past 2-3 months
Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best way to measure overall glucose control
How often?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-4 times a year
Target goal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 7%. Your goal may be different. Ask!
Action steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Check your blood glucose levels; use the results and discuss with your healthcare provider. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask if your medicines need changing <input type="checkbox"/> Review your meal plan and activity plan.

Blood Pressure

What is it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures the pressure against the walls of your blood vessels.
Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High blood pressure is more common in diabetes. • Having high blood pressure increases the risk of stroke, heart attack, kidney disease and eye disease.
How often?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At every check-up or at least once a year.
Target goal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 130/80. Both numbers should be in target.
Action steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Be more active. <input type="checkbox"/> If you weigh too much, even losing a few pounds can help. <input type="checkbox"/> Use less salt and eat fewer salty foods. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask about medicines that can help lower your blood pressure.

Cholesterol (LDL)

What is it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A blood test which measures the amount of fat which has built up on artery walls. LDL = “lousy” or “bad” cholesterol.
Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diabetes increases your risk of heart disease. LDL cholesterol can clog the walls of arteries. • If you catch problems early they can be treated.
How often?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once a year. More often if levels are high.
Target goal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LDL less than 100 (or lower if you have heart disease)
Action steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If you smoke, try to stop. <input type="checkbox"/> Be more active. Eat less saturated and trans fats. Lose weight. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask about medicines to lower your blood cholesterol.

Microalbuminuria

What is it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A urine test • Measures how well your kidneys are working • “Micro” means tiny. “albumin” is a kind of protein. • This test measures if there is any protein in your urine.
Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High blood glucose levels can damage kidneys. • If you catch problems early, they can be treated.
How often?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least once a year.
Target goal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 30.
Action steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Keep A1C in target range of less than 7%. <input type="checkbox"/> Keep blood pressure below 130/80. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask about medicines called ACE inhibitors that help control blood pressure and also help control microalbumin.

Eye Exam

What is it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A special exam to look at the retina of the eye. The eye must be dilated to see inside the whole eye.
Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High blood glucose and high blood pressure can damage tiny blood vessels in the eyes. Damage can be prevented if found early.
How often?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once a year.
Action steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule an annual eye exam. <input type="checkbox"/> Keep your A1C below 7% or as close to target as possible.

Foot Exam

What is it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A special exam by a podiatrist or other healthcare provider to carefully inspect your feet. • It is important to evaluate blood flow and nerve function.
Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foot problems can occur due to decreased circulation and lack of feeling in the foot from high glucose levels.
How often?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every visit to the doctor – take off your shoes and show your feet!
Action steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Inspect your feet every day at home. Look for any redness, cracks, sores or open areas. <input type="checkbox"/> Wear well fitted shoes and socks that absorb moisture. <input type="checkbox"/> Do not cut toenails. File them.

Other tips for staying healthy

- Check your blood glucose regularly. Learn what results are too high for you and what results are too low. Know what to do when they fall out of range.
- Control blood glucose as well as possible. Do not delay using insulin if necessary.
- Take medicines as prescribed. Talk to your healthcare provider if you experience any side effects or decide to stop taking them for any reason.
- Ask about taking a daily aspirin.
- See your dentist for regular check-ups.
- Have a flu shot each year.