

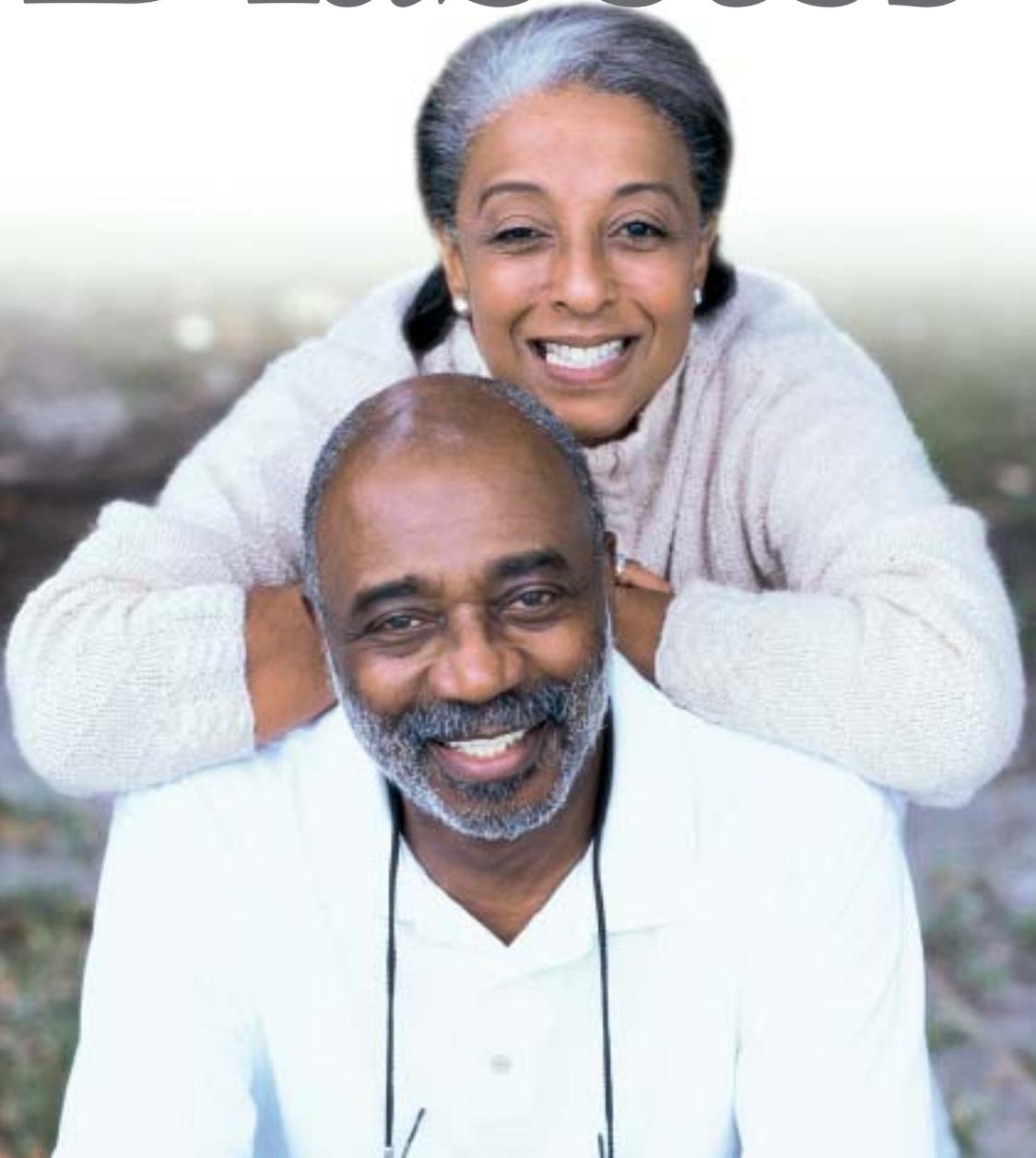
ACP

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS
INTERNAL MEDICINE | Doctors for Adults

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ACP SPECIAL REPORT

Managing the ABCs of Diabetes



Living Well

Diabetes is a lifelong disease that makes it harder for the body to turn food into energy.



It can cause sugar to build up in the blood, and high levels of blood sugar can damage blood vessels in the heart, kidneys, and eyes, as well as nerves in the feet.

Type 1 diabetes is usually diagnosed in children, teenagers, or adults younger than 30, although it can occur at any age. It is treated by taking insulin shots daily and following a meal plan.

Type 2 diabetes is the most common form. It is usually found in people aged 40 years or older, overweight people, or those with a family history of the disease, but it is sometimes found in children and adolescents, as well. Treatment includes meal planning, exercise, and medications if necessary.

Symptoms of diabetes may include:

- Increased thirst
- Increased urination
- Increased hunger
- Blurred vision
- Fatigue
- Dry mouth
- Unexplained weight loss
- Numbness of the hands or feet
- Impotence
- Dark, velvety-looking skin in the armpit or back of the neck

However, no physical problems may be evident until you experience complications, such as a heart attack, stroke, or a foot infection that does not heal.

When you have diabetes, you need to take special care of yourself. But diabetes doesn't have to stop you from living a full life. By working with your health care team, you can learn to manage blood sugar levels and reduce your risk of related health problems.

Talk to your doctor, use this guide, and call 1-800-DIABETES (342-2383) to learn more. Other valuable resources are The National Diabetes Education Program at 1-800-438-5383 and the following Web sites:

www.diabetes.org
www.doctorsforadults.com
www.ndep.nih.gov

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This ACP Special Report is brought to you by "Make the Link! Diabetes, Heart Disease and Stroke," an American Diabetes Association–American College of Cardiology initiative funded by the following corporate partners: Aventis Pharmaceuticals; AstraZeneca LP; Bristol-Myers Squibb Co.; Eli Lilly & Co.; GlaxoSmithKline; Merck & Co., Inc., and Merck/Schering-Plough Pharmaceuticals; Monarch Pharmaceuticals and Wyeth Pharmaceuticals; Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corp.; and Pfizer, Inc.



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To Manage the Risks

By managing the **ABCs** of diabetes, you can reduce your risk of heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, and blindness.

If you have diabetes, your risk of heart attack or stroke is increased. Risk factors include:

- High blood pressure
- Abnormal blood fat (cholesterol) levels
- Obesity
- Protein in the urine
- Insulin resistance, a condition most often seen with type 2 diabetes

What are the ABCs of Diabetes?

A is for A1C. This blood test shows average blood sugar for the past 2 to 3 months. An A1C test can help you monitor how well your treatment plan is working. Have an A1C test at least twice a year.

B is for blood pressure. American College of Physicians has made the

following important recommendations:

- **Blood pressure control must be a priority if you have hypertension and type 2 diabetes.**
- You should have your blood pressure checked each time you visit your doctor, and your goal should be a reading of no more than 135/80.
- Thiazide diuretics or ACE inhibitors are types of medications that your doctor might prescribe to help control your blood pressure.

C is for cholesterol. Your cholesterol numbers tell the amount of fat in your blood. HDL cholesterol helps protect the heart. LDL cholesterol can clog arteries and lead to heart disease. Triglycerides are another kind of blood fat that can affect the risk of heart attack or stroke. Get your cholesterol checked at least once a year.

Talk with your doctor about the best ABC goals for you. Then, record your goals and results in the chart below.

ABCs	Suggested Goals		My Goals	My Results	
	U.S. Units	Int'l. Units		Dates	Numbers
A1C	Below 7	Below 7			
Blood pressure	Below 135/80*	Below 135/80*			
Cholesterol—Total	Below 200	Below 5.2			
LDL	Below 100	Below 2.6			
HDL	Above 40	Above 1.0			
Triglycerides	Below 150	Below 1.7			

*The American Diabetes Association recommends further lowering blood pressure to 130/80 to prevent complications.



Learning About the A1C Test

Checking your blood sugar throughout the day provides an important—but limited—measure of how well you are managing your diabetes. Daily checks are like a snapshot of blood sugar control at any given time. The A1C test shows a much bigger picture. This test measures average blood sugar levels over a 2- to 3-month period and is the only accurate measure of overall diabetes control.



Your health care provider may suggest having the A1C test twice a year. If your treatment plan changes, you may be tested more often. This simple blood test can be done in your doctor's office, and you don't have to avoid eating before taking the test.

Understanding the Numbers

Talk with your doctor about your personal A1C goal. Then, you can work together to find ways of meeting this goal. By lowering your A1C value just 1 percentage point, you greatly reduce the risk for eye, kidney, and nerve problems. In general, if your A1C value is:

- **Less than 7%**, your diabetes treatment plan is currently working. This helps reduce the risk of health problems. Be sure to get your A1C checked at least twice a year. Over time, adjustments in your treatment plan may be needed.
- **Greater than 7%**, reducing your blood sugar levels will be a priority. Each point over 7 greatly increases a person's risk for developing diabetes-related complications.

Other Tests

Your Doctor May Recommend

- **Serum creatinine**—A blood test that evaluates kidney function
- **Thyroid hormones**—A blood test that evaluates thyroid function
- **Electrocardiogram (ECG)**—A noninvasive test that records the electrical activity of the heart

Making Wise Food Choices



Good eating habits benefit everyone, but they're even more important for people with diabetes. A healthy diet and exercise will help you lose weight and control your blood sugar. Losing even 10 pounds will improve your body's ability to use sugar for energy. Good control of your blood sugar will help reduce your chances of problems, such as kidney damage and blindness. A dietitian can help you set up a meal plan that suits the way you live and includes foods you like.

Carbohydrates (carbs) include starches and sugars. They are found in many foods, such as fruit, bread, potatoes, pasta, milk, and sweets. Of all the foods you eat, carbs have the most effect on blood sugar. Your dietitian can help you plan how many carbohydrates to eat at each meal. Eating about the same amount of carbs each day can help you reach your A1C goal.

Balance Your Meals

Healthy food choices are vital to controlling blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol. Choose a variety of foods. Eating less fat and salt will help, too. Start with the meal planning tips shown here.

- Fill 1/4 of your plate with grains or other starches. Choices include breads, tortillas, rice, pasta, dried beans, corn, peas, potatoes, and yams.
- Cover 1/4 of the plate with fish, meat, poultry, or other protein sources. Grill or broil meats, and trim fat and skin.
- Put color on your plate. Choose a mix of nonstarch vegetables, such as salad, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, and cauliflower. Fill 1/2 of the plate with these foods.
- Add a piece of fruit or a roll to finish the meal.
- Reduce salt by eating fresh vegetables instead of canned. Also, try using half the salt a recipe calls for.
- Season with fresh herbs or lemon instead of salt and butter.
- Use canola or olive oil instead of butter or lard.
- Split sweets and treats with a friend or family member. Or save the rest for another day.

Fitness Matters

Fitness plays a special role for people with diabetes. Getting fit can help you lose extra weight, lower blood pressure, and control blood sugar. Pacing yourself is key. Start small. Choose activities you know you can do. As your comfort level rises, you can move on to brisk exercise.

Start with More Movement

Being more active really isn't hard. To start, work toward being active for 30 minutes a day. You can do it all at once. Or, you can break it into three 10-minute sessions. To add movement to your day:

- Go for a 10-minute walk after each meal. Take along the dog or a family member for added fun.
- Explore a museum, aquarium, or zoo.
- Go to a farmers' market. This is a great way to exercise and get fresh air. It's also a good place to buy healthy fruits and vegetables.
- Use stairs instead of the elevator.
- Park your car in the space farthest from where you're going.
- Walk around the store or the mall before you shop.
- Put on music and dance for a few songs.
- Rake leaves or pull weeds.

Stay Safe

- Wear the proper footwear for the activity. Be sure to dress for the weather.
- Drink a glass of water before and after exercise. Also, carry a bottle of water with you during activity.
- Keep a carb source, such as glucose tablets or hard candy, with you.
- Wear identification that says you have diabetes, in case of emergency.

For best results, mix fitness with fun. That way you'll be more likely to stick with your plan.



Ask these questions when your doctor prescribes a medicine. Write the answers in pencil so that you can make changes if your medications change.

- When do I take the medicine (before a meal, with a meal, after a meal)?

- How often should I take the medicine?

- Should I take the medicine at the same time every day?

- What should I do if I forget to take my medicine?

- What side effects may occur?

- What should I do if I experience side effects?

- I should call my doctor if I have any of the following problems with my medicines.

- I should call my doctor if my blood sugar is too low or too high for several days.
Too low is _____ mg/dL for _____ days.
Too high is _____ mg/dL for _____ days.
- My blood sugar should be between _____ mg/dL and _____ mg/dL before my first meal of the day.
- My blood sugar should be between _____ mg/dL and _____ mg/dL 1 to 2 hours after a meal.
- My A1C should be _____ %.

Fill in the names of your medicines, what they are for, when you should take them, and how much you should take.

Use pencil so that you can make changes if your medications change.

■ **Name of medicine:**

What it is for: _____

Time: _____ Meal: _____

How much: _____

■ **Name of medicine:**

What it is for: _____

Time: _____ Meal: _____

How much: _____

■ **Name of medicine:**

What it is for: _____

Time: _____ Meal: _____

How much: _____

Source: www.niddk.nih.gov

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For managing your **blood pressure** and **cholesterol**, you may also go to www.doctorsforadults.com
www.diabetes.org/makethelink
www.americanheart.org

What is a doctor of internal medicine?

Doctors of internal medicine, often called “internists,” focus on adult medicine. They care for their patients for life—from the teen years through old age. Internists have had special study and training focusing on the prevention and treatment of adult diseases. At least 3 of their 7 or more years of medical school and postgraduate training are dedicated to learning how to prevent, diagnose, and treat diseases that affect adults. Internists are sometimes referred to as the “doctor’s doctor,” because they are called upon to act as consultants to other physicians and help solve puzzling diagnostic problems.



Why choose an internist for your health care?

An internist, just like a family or general practitioner, can serve as your primary care doctor. But internists are unique because they focus on adult medicine. Internists don’t deliver babies, they don’t treat children, and they don’t do surgery. They do, however, have wide-ranging knowledge of complex diseases that affect adults. With in-depth training in adult medicine, an internist is your best choice to help you navigate the increasingly complex world of medical care.

An internist can treat you for something as routine as the flu or fatigue or provide in-depth care for diseases such as diabetes, depression, cancer, or heart disease. Internists often coordinate the subspecialists a patient might see in the process of treating an illness. Internists’ patients like knowing that they have a relationship with a physician who is equipped to deal with whatever problem the patient may have—no matter how simple or complex.

What is American College of Physicians?

American College of Physicians (ACP) is the nation’s largest medical specialty organization and second-largest physician group. Its membership includes more than 115,000 internal medicine physicians, related subspecialists, and medical students. Internists treat the majority of adults in the United States. The ACP mission is to enhance the quality and effectiveness of health care by fostering excellence and professionalism in the practice of medicine. ACP is headquartered in Philadelphia, with an office focusing on public policy in Washington, DC.

**For more information about
internists and internal medicine,
visit www.doctorsforadults.com.**

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