

WOMENHEART



Diabetes is a condition that occurs when your blood glucose (also called blood sugar) is too high. This occurs because the body either doesn't make enough insulin (a hormone produced by the pancreas) or is unable to use the insulin it makes effectively. Generally, the higher your blood glucose, the higher your risk. Over 38 million people of all ages — or nearly 1 in 9 people in the US — have diabetes. High blood glucose from diabetes can damage blood vessels and the nerves that control your heart and blood vessels. People who have diabetes, especially women, are at higher risk of heart attacks, stroke and heart disease progression.



DIABETES & HEART DISEASE



WOMENHEART

THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR
WOMEN WITH HEART DISEASE



P 202.728.7199 | [womenheart.org](https://www.womenheart.org)

WOMENHEART: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease is the nation's first and still only patient centered organization exclusively focused on serving millions of American women living with or at risk for heart disease — the leading cause of death in women. WomenHeart is solely devoted to advancing women's heart health through advocacy, community education, and the nation's only patient support network for women living with heart disease. WomenHeart is both a coalition and a community of thousands of members nationwide, including women heart patients and their families, physicians, and health advocates, all committed to helping women live longer, healthier lives. To learn more or to donate visit [womenheart.org](https://www.womenheart.org).

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DIABETES & HEART DISEASE

Diabetes is a progressive condition, meaning that your treatment plan will change over time. There are different types of diabetes.

Prediabetes is a condition where your blood glucose is higher than normal, but not high enough to be diagnosed with diabetes. **More than 1 in 3** Americans have prediabetes.

Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune condition that causes your body to lose the ability to produce insulin. People with Type 1 diabetes need to take insulin.

Type 2 diabetes is increasingly common in both younger and older individuals and usually develops slowly over time affecting the body's ability to keep glucose at a healthy level. Some people can manage type 2 through lifestyle alone (nutrition modifications + exercise) and some require insulin just like those with type 1.

Women who experienced **gestational diabetes**, or high glucose first discovered during pregnancy, are much more likely to develop diabetes in the future. They are also at higher risk of heart disease.

The best way to achieve optimal health with diabetes and heart disease is to be informed, have open and frequent communication with your healthcare team — and take active steps to reach your glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol targets.



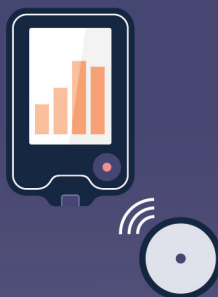
KNOW YOUR NUMBERS



Glucose

A1c is a measurement of blood glucose that gives a ~3-month average. For most women, this goal will be < 7%.

Depending on the type of diabetes you have, whether or not you take medications, along with other factors, it might be recommended to regularly check blood glucose throughout the day through traditional fingerstick methods. Alternatively, many people utilize a CGM, or continuous glucose monitor, to assess their levels (and time above and below range). CGM can be an important tool to assess the impact of food, physical activity and medications.



Blood Pressure and Cholesterol

High blood pressure and high cholesterol are often conditions that co-occur with diabetes. They are also risk factors for heart-related events, such as heart attacks and stroke.



Elevated Blood Pressure systolic ≥ 120 -129, diastolic < 80 mmHg (typically managed with lifestyle behaviors)

High Blood Pressure $\geq 130/80$ mmHg (medications recommended)

Optimal LDL Cholesterol < 70 mg/dL

Your doctor may also order a lipoprotein a or Lp(a) test — a type of LDL cholesterol that is determined by your genes and not generally affected by lifestyle. Medications are available to improve blood pressure and cholesterol, however, studies have shown that **women are less likely to have them prescribed**.

Diabetes and Heart Disease Management

All individuals who have diabetes and heart disease can significantly reduce their risk of disease progression by engaging in healthy lifestyle behaviors.

NUTRITION – There is not one specific eating plan that has been found to improve diabetes or heart disease. Many different eating patterns have been found to be effective. Generally, these eating patterns emphasize fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

Depending on medication regimen, some people need to closely monitor carbohydrate or 'carb' intake, ensuring they are spreading carbs out throughout the day as these foods have the most impact on blood glucose.

Carbohydrates are found in:

- fruits
- grains (pasta, bread, oatmeal)
- starchy vegetables (potatoes, peas, corn)
- dairy (milk and yogurt)



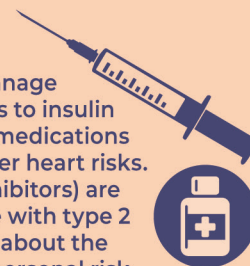
Choose whole, minimally processed food whenever possible. Talk to a registered dietitian nutritionist to help you create an eating plan that will work best for your individual needs.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY – Being physically active on a regular basis can have similar effects to some diabetes medications in terms of glucose reductions. It can also help lower blood pressure and improve cholesterol levels.



Aim to be active for 30 minutes a day on most days of the week! For people taking insulin and some injectable medications, you will want to test glucose before, during and after exercise.

MEDICATIONS – There are a variety of medications that can help individuals manage their glucose levels from oral medications to insulin and other injectable medications. Some medications have also been found to significantly lower heart risks. These medications (GLP-1s and SGLT2 inhibitors) are currently recommended for some people with type 2 diabetes. Talk with your healthcare team about the best medications for you based on your personal risk.



Heart disease is the biggest health threat for someone with diabetes. Regular check-ins with your health care team and self-advocacy are important!

LEARN MORE AT [WOMENHEART.ORG](https://www.womenheart.org)