



# Lifesaving Tips About ... Managing Diabetes and PAD

## What Is the Link Between Diabetes and PAD?

**Peripheral artery disease (PAD)** is a common disease that occurs when the arteries in the legs become narrowed or clogged with fatty deposits, or **plaque**. When leg arteries are clogged, there is less blood flow from the heart to the legs and feet.

People with diabetes are at higher risk for having PAD. Studies have found that one out of three people older than age 50 who has diabetes also has PAD. PAD is also more common in certain racial and ethnic groups. Individuals who have both diabetes and PAD:

- Have a lower life expectancy
- Are at increased risk for a heart attack or stroke
- Might not notice PAD symptoms right away, because people with diabetes have less feeling (or decreased sensitivity) in their feet
- Experience slower wound healing due to decreased blood flow to the feet and legs

- Are at higher risk for losing a foot or leg due to amputation

## How Do I Know if I Have PAD?

*Talk with your health care provider right away if you have any of these warning signs of PAD, have had diabetes for a while, and/or you are age 50 or higher:*

- Fatigue, tiredness, or pain in your legs, thighs, or buttocks that always happens when you walk but goes away at rest
- Foot or toe pain that makes it hard to sleep or wakes you up
- Skin sores (ulcers) or wounds on your feet or toes that do not heal right away

*Ask your health care provider if getting tested for PAD is right for you.* A PAD test is recommended for people with diabetes who are younger than 50. Even if you don't have symptoms, it is very important to get tested if you have other risk factors, such as smoking, high blood pressure, or cholesterol problems.

To test for PAD, your health care provider will examine the pulses in your feet

and legs and may order a test called the **ankle-brachial index**, or ABI. The ABI is the best test for finding out if you have PAD. It can be done in your provider's office. ABI compares the blood pressure in your ankles with the blood pressure in your arms.

## What Steps Can I Take to Control My Diabetes and PAD?

The good news is that there are steps you can take to prevent more damage to your blood vessels and decrease your risk for complications. These are the **ABCs of diabetes**. Ask your health care team what your numbers are and work together to develop a plan to meet your target goals.

- **A** is for **A1c**. This number measures your average blood glucose over the past two to three months.
- **B** is for your blood pressure.
- **C** is for your cholesterol.

In most cases, these steps can help you manage the ABCs of diabetes:



Including physical activity in your daily routine



Maintaining a healthy weight



Taking medicines if needed and as prescribed



Not smoking



Taking antiplatelet medicines if your health care provider says they are right for you

## What Should My ABC Target Goals Be?

The American Diabetes Association (ADA) suggests the target numbers listed below, but your targets may differ. Talk with your health care team about the best targets for you.

### Your Blood Glucose

Check your blood glucose using a blood glucose meter as often as your health care team suggests. The meter tells you what your blood glucose is at the time you do the test.

ADA Targets for Blood Glucose	My Usual Results	My Targets
<b>Before Meals:</b> 90 to 130 mg/dl	_____ to _____	_____ to _____
<b>2 hours after the start of a meal:</b> Less than 180 mg/dl	less than _____	less than _____

### A1c

At least twice a year, your health care team should order an A1c test. The results will give your average blood glucose for the past two to three months.

ADA Target for A1	My Last Result	My Target
Less than 7%		

### Your Blood Pressure

At every doctor's office visit, your health care team should check your blood pressure.

ADA Blood Pressure Target	My Last Result	My Target
Less than 130/80 mmHg		

### Your Cholesterol and Triglycerides

Every year, your health care team should check your cholesterol and blood fat (triglyceride) levels.

	ADA Targets	My Last Result	My Target
LDL cholesterol	Less than 100 mg/dl		
HDL cholesterol	For men: above 40 mg/dl		
	For women: above 50 mg/dl		
Triglycerides	Less than 150 mg/dl		

# Lifestyle Tips for Managing Diabetes

Many people think that having diabetes means you cannot eat your favorite foods. But you can still enjoy many of the foods you like. Portion sizes, or the amount of food you eat, affects your blood glucose. Ask your health care team to refer you to a dietitian who helps people with diabetes. The two of you will design a meal plan that is right for you and can help you reach your goals.

Also keep the following tips in mind.

- **Count carbohydrates (also called carbs).** Breads, tortillas, biscuits, rice, crackers, cereal, fruit, juice, milk, yogurt, potatoes, corn, peas, and sweet potatoes tend to raise your blood glucose levels more than other foods. Ask your health care team what amount of carbohydrates is right for you and how to keep your carb intake at a reasonable level.
- **Choose foods low in saturated fat.** Cutting down on foods that have saturated fat can help lower your low-density lipoprotein (LDL, or “bad”) cholesterol and prevent heart disease. Saturated fat can cause blockages in your blood vessels. Foods low in saturated fat include fish that are high in omega-3 fatty acids (salmon, trout, sardines, and tuna), lean beef, lean pork, chicken breasts, ground turkey, and avocados.



## Losing Excess Weight

Managing or losing extra weight can be challenging, but it is possible with support and a plan that works for you. It is important to be kind to yourself and take it one step at a time. Here are a few tips that may help get you started. *Remember: Before starting any weight-loss plan or diet, check in with your health care provider to make sure it is safe for you.*

- **Get at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise each day.** Examples of aerobic exercise include walking briskly, dancing, rowing, swimming or water aerobics, and biking. It is OK if it takes several weeks to build up to a practice of 30 minutes daily. The most important thing is to be physically active. Daily physical activity helps lower your blood glucose and blood pressure and control your cholesterol levels. *Your health care team may want to check your heart function before you start new activities.* They can help you plan the exercise program that is best for you, especially if you have pain in your legs when walking or

during other physical activity.

- **Track your meals.** Research shows that being mindful of what you eat can help you trim calories. Try writing down what you eat each day.
- **Make more meals at home.** Cooking meals at home is an easy way to cut back on excess calories. Dining out or ordering fast food makes it harder to control the amount of cholesterol, salt, and fat in your food.
- **Increase the fiber in your diet.** Your diet should include high-fiber foods, such as fruits, vegetables, dried beans and peas, oatmeal, and whole-grain breads, cereals, and pasta.



## Medicines

Some people need medication as well as meal planning and physical activity to reach their blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol targets—at least at first. Talk with your health care team about whether you need medications, and if so, which ones would best help you reach your goals.

## Other Ways to Monitor Yourself and Stay on Top of Your Health

- Check your feet every day for cuts, blisters, red spots, and swelling. *Call your health care team right away about any sores that will not heal.* Also, ask your health care team to check your feet at every visit.
- Get an eye exam each year to check the blood vessels in your eyes for any early warning signs of damage. Contact your health care provider if your eyeglass prescription changes within a year.
- Have your urine tested each year to check how well your kidneys function.
- Get a flu shot every year and a pneumonia vaccine at least once to prevent being hospitalized if you get sick. When you turn 65, you should get another pneumonia vaccine, unless you have had one in the past five years.

## My Lifesaving Diabetes Care Plan

What are three things I can do this week to better manage my diabetes?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What are some things I need to talk to my health care provider about?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Who can help support me in the changes I need to make in my life?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

For more information, review these related flyers:

- Lifesaving Tips About ... Foot Care and PAD
- Lifesaving Tips About ... High Blood Pressure and PAD
- What Is Peripheral Artery Disease?

## Questions for Your Doctor

It is important to work closely with your health care provider about your diagnosis and treatment. You can bring this form with you to help talk to your medical provider about any questions and concerns you may have.



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