

Diabetes

What is diabetes?

Normally insulin transports blood sugar into your cells, where it is used as energy. Diabetes results when your body can't use or make enough insulin, so the level of glucose (sugar) in your blood becomes higher than usual.

Why should I control my blood sugar?

It is important to control your blood sugar levels because it will help reduce your risk of complications from your diabetes. This can cause damage to your organs, such as the heart, kidneys, eyes and nerve endings. People with diabetes are two to four times more likely to have a heart attack or stroke than people without diabetes.

How can I reduce my risk?

- ♥ Follow a heart healthy eating pattern* and reduce foods with added sugars and white flour bakery items. Choose bread and cereals with high-fibre content
- ♥ Lose weight if you are overweight
- ♥ Do moderate physical activity for at least 30 minutes on most days or daily
- ♥ Stop smoking, if you smoke.

*Ask your GP, nurse or health professional for an information sheet.

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If you have diabetes, then:

- ♥ Check your blood sugars regularly as advised by your doctor, nurse or health professional
- ♥ Take medications as prescribed by your doctor
- ♥ Have your blood pressure and cholesterol levels checked every three months until well controlled, then every six months.

If your cardiovascular risk is very high, your doctor, nurse or health professional will discuss drug treatment options as well as lifestyle advice with you.

Most people who have diabetes and start medication will be on medication for life.

Check ups

Each year, take time to review your health with your doctor or nurse. GPs offer free annual diabetes “get checked” visits.

Further information is available from Diabetes NZ’s website www.diabetes.org.nz