INFORM Yourself
DIABETES

Make the Decision to Protect Your Vision
Diabetes can affect your vision by damaging the blood vessels in your eyes. This leads to a condition called “diabetic retinopathy.” It can cause decreased vision and, eventually, blindness. You are especially at risk if you’ve had diabetes for a long time, your blood sugar levels are not well controlled, you smoke, you have high blood pressure, or you have high cholesterol. The good news is that you can take steps to help prevent retinopathy and other eye problems. Visit your health care provider regularly. Follow your provider’s advice about controlling your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels. Keeping these at healthy levels will reduce the risk of damaged blood vessels. Your provider will likely recommend regular eye exams during which an eye doctor checks the blood vessels in your eyes. These exams are important because symptoms don’t usually appear until the damage to your eyes is serious. Regular exams will help catch problems early. And that may help you preserve your eyesight!

Source: MedlinePlus

Specialists
Endocrinologists are doctors who specialize in diseases or disorders of the glands. This includes diabetes. It’s a good idea to go to an endocrinologist when you are first diagnosed with diabetes. This person can also help if you are having a hard time managing your blood sugar levels or if you have other chronic conditions. You may be able to manage your diabetes by working with your primary care provider. But there may also be times when you need to work with an endocrinologist. Either way, make sure to visit your provider regularly. Your provider will help you keep your blood sugar levels under control and look for signs of complications.

Go Ahead, Put Your Feet Up…and Pay Attention to Them!
Having diabetes means your feet need extra attention. This is because diabetes can damage the blood vessels and nerves in your feet. This can cause loss of feeling in your feet, which can lead to increased risk of injury. In addition, if you do injure your feet (for example, cuts, punctures, scrapes), the wounds won’t heal as well and may become easily infected. If you smoke, the problem will be even worse because smoking further decreases blood flow. It’s really important to protect your feet and do everything you can to prevent problems! You can do this in several ways.

- Quit smoking.
- Visit your health care provider regularly to help keep your blood sugar and blood pressure levels under control.
- Inspect your feet every day to look for injuries. Reduce the risk of injuries by protecting your feet with socks and shoes that fit properly. Avoid walking barefoot, especially on hot or rough surfaces like beaches, sidewalks, or pavement.
- Do not try to take care of foot injuries on your own, even if they are small. Tell your health care provider about any new foot injuries or problems right away.
- Ask if it is safe for you to cut your own toenails or if a foot doctor (podiatrist) should help you with nail care.

Source: MedlinePlus
Does Diabetes Have Your Blood Pressure Up?

According to the American Diabetes Association (ADA), 2 out of 3 adults with diabetes have high blood pressure. Blood pressure is the force of blood flow inside your veins. When you have high blood pressure, your blood goes through your veins with too much force, which makes your heart work harder. This increases your risk for heart attack, stroke, eye problems, and kidney disease.

The only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to get it checked by your health care provider. You should get it checked at least 2 to 4 times a year. Having your blood pressure checked regularly and taking action to reach your blood pressure target may prevent or delay problems associated with diabetes.

Lifestyle changes and medication can help control blood pressure. Your health care provider will find the treatment that is right for you. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also recommends the lifestyle changes listed below.

**Eat a healthy diet**
Studies have shown that eating a healthy diet can lower blood pressure. Eat lots of fresh fruits and vegetables and reduce saturated fat and cholesterol. Limit the amount of salt you add to your food. Be careful when it comes to processed foods and restaurant meals—they often have a lot of salt.

**Maintain a healthy weight**
Being overweight can raise your blood pressure. Losing weight can help lower it. To find out if your weight is healthy, ask your health care provider to calculate your body mass index (BMI).

**Be active**
Physical activity can help lower blood pressure. Most adults should get about 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week.

**Don’t smoke**
Smoking injures blood vessels and speeds up the hardening of the arteries. Smoking also puts you at a major risk for heart disease and stroke. If you don’t smoke, don’t start. If you do smoke, quit! It will lower your risk for heart disease and stroke. Your health care provider can suggest programs to help you quit.

**Limit alcohol use**
Drinking too much alcohol is associated with high blood pressure. If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation—no more than 1 drink per day for women or 2 drinks per day for men.

For links to educational resources and helpful websites, visit our website at [www.primewest.org/high-blood-pressure](http://www.primewest.org/high-blood-pressure). You can also find more information on the CDC’s website at [www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/index.htm).

Sources: ADA, CDC
Diabetes is a sneaky disease. Many people have it for years before they know it. Even after being diagnosed, you may not actually feel “bad” most of the time. And when you feel fine, you may not be as motivated to keep up with your diabetes care. But the dangers of uncontrolled diabetes are very real and they will catch up with you. Unfortunately, by the time you notice, damage will have already been done.

Here are just some of the ways that diabetes affects the lives of people in the United States:

- Diabetes is the 7th leading cause of death
- Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness in people ages 20 – 74
- Diabetes, along with high blood pressure, is the leading cause of chronic kidney disease, including end stage renal disease (ESRD) or kidney failure
- Diabetes can cause complications for women during pregnancy
- Diabetes is a leading cause of lower-extremity amputations that are not the result of trauma
- Diabetes increases the risk of dying from heart disease 2 – 4 times and the risk of having a stroke 1.5 times

Those are some pretty sobering facts. But if you start taking care of yourself right now, you will reduce your risk of becoming part of those statistics.

Control your blood sugar

Most of the complications of diabetes are due to the effects of continued high blood sugar. High blood sugar causes damage to blood vessels. Since blood vessels supply oxygen to all areas of the body, this leads to nerve damage and damage to kidneys, heart, eyes, and other organs in your body.

You may not feel different when your blood sugar is too high. But it will do long-term damage to your body. Take the following steps to control your blood sugar:

- Test your blood sugar regularly. Your health care provider will tell you how often, but most people need to test 2 – 4 times a day.
- If you are supposed to take medicine, take it as directed and on time.
- Eat properly. This means regular, scheduled, balanced meals. Eat whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and lean protein. Learn to keep track of the amount of carbohydrates in the food you eat (this affects your blood sugar). Avoid foods with a lot of extra sugar. Drink water or other drinks that don’t have added sugar.

Practice good health care habits

Get regular health care checkups. Your health care provider will tell you how often to have each of these tests or exams:
- Blood tests to monitor your average blood sugar levels
- Blood pressure and cholesterol monitoring
- Blood and urine tests to check your kidney function
- Foot exams
- Eye exams
- Dental exams

You should monitor your health at home, too. Check your feet daily for any sores or blisters. If you notice symptoms like blurred vision, dark urine, or swollen gums, don’t ignore them. Call your health care provider and ask if you should make an appointment. Get regular exercise, but not on an empty stomach. Do not change your medication dosages on your own—always check with your provider first.

The complications of diabetes can be prevented or delayed, but it’s up to you to take charge and manage your disease.

Take Care of Your Kidneys

Your kidneys are important because they clean toxins and extra fluid from your blood. High blood sugar levels can damage your kidneys. Over time, damage to your kidneys can cause high blood pressure and kidney failure. If your kidneys fail, you will need either dialysis or a kidney transplant. This makes it very important to go to your health care provider regularly and control your blood sugar levels. Your provider will also do regular lab tests to check for kidney disease. These tests are necessary because kidney damage won’t cause symptoms until the damage is severe. Your kidneys work hard to keep you healthy—so return the favor and do what you can to keep them healthy!

Source: MedlinePlus
Health and wellness or prevention information

Note: The information in this magazine is not professional medical advice. It is not a substitute for diagnosis or treatment. Do not ignore your health care provider’s advice or wait to ask for it because of something you read here. Links to other websites are provided as a resource only. PrimeWest Health does not endorse, recommend, or pay for products or services offered by such sites.
Attention. If you need free help interpreting this document, call the above number.

1-866-431-0801 (toll free); TTY 1-800-627-3529 or 711

Mلاحظة: إذا أردت مساعدة مجانية لترجمة هذه الوثيقة، اتصل على الرقم أعلاه.

請注意，如果您需要免費協助傳譯這份文件、請撥打上面的電話號碼。

Attention. Si vous avez besoin d’une aide gratuite pour interpréter le présent document, veuillez appeler au numéro ci-dessus.

Thov ua twb zoo nyeem. Yog hais tias koj xav tau kev pab txhais lus rau tsab ntaub ntawv no pub dawb, ces hu rau tus najnpawb xov tooj saum toj no.

알려드립니다. 이 문서에 대한 이해를 돕기 위해 무료로 제공되는 도움을 받으시려면 위의 전화번호로 연락하십시오.

โปรดดู. คุณสามารถขอความช่วยเหลือในภาษาแปลฟรีตามกำหนดมั่นใจ, ซึ่ง
ให้บริการโดยเฉพาะในสัญญา.

Hubachiisa. Dokumenttiin kun tola akka siif hiikamu gargaarsa hoo feete, lakkoobsa gubbatti kennie bilbili.

Внимание: если вам нужна бесплатная помощь в устном переводе данного документа, позвоните по указанному выше телефону.

Digniin. Haddii aad u baahantahay caawimaad lacag-la’aan ah ee tarjumaadda (afeelinta) qoraalkan, lambarka kore wac.

Atención. Si desea recibir asistencia gratuita para interpretar este documento, llame al número indicado arriba.

Chú ý. Nếu quý vị cần được giúp đỡ dịch tài liệu này miễn phí, xin gọi số bên trên.
Civil Rights Notice

Discrimination is against the law. PrimeWest Health does not discriminate on the basis of any of the following:

- race
- color
- national origin
- creed
- religion
- sexual orientation
- public assistance status
- age
- disability (including physical or mental impairment)
- sex (including sex stereotypes and gender identity)
- marital status
- political beliefs
- medical condition
- health status
- receipt of health care services
- claims experience
- medical history
- genetic information

Auxiliary Aids and Services: PrimeWest Health provides auxiliary aids and services, like qualified interpreters or information in accessible formats, free of charge and in a timely manner to ensure an equal opportunity to participate in our health care programs. Contact PrimeWest Health at memberservices@primewest.org, or call Member Services at 1-866-431-0801 (toll free) or TTY 1-800-627-3529 or 711.

Language Assistance Services: PrimeWest Health provides translated documents and spoken language interpreting, free of charge and in a timely manner, when language assistance services are necessary to ensure limited English speakers have meaningful access to our information and services. Contact PrimeWest Health at memberservices@primewest.org, or call Member Services at 1-866-431-0801 (toll free) or TTY 1-800-627-3529 or 711.

Civil Rights Complaints

You have the right to file a discrimination complaint if you believe you were treated in a discriminatory way by PrimeWest Health. You may contact any of the following four agencies directly to file a discrimination complaint.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office for Civil Rights (OCR)
You have the right to file a complaint with the OCR, a federal agency, if you believe you have been discriminated against because of any of the following:

- race
- color
- national origin
- age
- disability
- sex
- religion (in some cases)
Contact the **OCR** directly to file a complaint:
Director
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Civil Rights
200 Independence Avenue SW
Room 515F
HHH Building
Washington, DC 20201
Customer Response Center: Toll-free: 800-368-1019
TDD 800-537-7697
Email: ocrmail@hhs.gov

**Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MDHR)**
In Minnesota, you have the right to file a complaint with the MDHR if you believe you have been discriminated against because of any of the following:

- race
- color
- national origin
- religion
- creed
- sex
- sexual orientation
- marital status
- public assistance status
- disability

Contact the **MDHR** directly to file a complaint:
Minnesota Department of Human Rights
540 Fairview Avenue North
Suite 201
St. Paul, MN 55104
651-539-1100 (voice)
800-657-3704 (toll free)
711 or 800-627-3529 (MN Relay)
651-296-9042 (fax)
Info.MDHR@state.mn.us (email)

**Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS)**
You have the right to file a complaint with DHS if you believe you have been discriminated against in our health care programs because of any of the following:

- race
- color
- national origin
- creed
- religion
- sexual orientation
- public assistance status
- age
- disability (including physical or mental impairment)
- sex (including sex stereotypes and gender identity)
- marital status
- political beliefs
- medical condition
- health status
- receipt of health care services
- claims experience
- medical history
- genetic information

Complaints must be in writing and filed within 180 days of the date you discovered the alleged discrimination. The complaint must contain your name and address and describe the discrimination you are complaining about. After we get your complaint, we will review it and notify you in writing about whether we have authority to investigate. If we do, we will investigate the complaint.
DHS will notify you in writing of the investigation’s outcome. You have the right to appeal the outcome if you disagree with the decision. To appeal, you must send a written request to have DHS review the investigation outcome. Be brief and state why you disagree with the decision. Include additional information you think is important.

If you file a complaint in this way, the people who work for the agency named in the complaint cannot retaliate against you. This means they cannot punish you in any way for filing a complaint. Filing a complaint in this way does not stop you from seeking out other legal or administrative actions.

Contact DHS directly to file a discrimination complaint:
Civil Rights Coordinator
Minnesota Department of Human Services
Equal Opportunity and Access Division
P.O. Box 64997
St. Paul, MN 55164-0997
651-431-3040 (voice) or use your preferred relay service

PrimeWest Health Complaint Notice
You have the right to file a complaint with PrimeWest Health if you believe you have been discriminated against because of any of the following:

- medical condition
- health status
- receipt of health care services
- claims experience
- medical history
- genetic information
- disability (including mental or physical impairment)
- marital status
- age
- sex (including sex stereotypes and gender identity)
- sexual orientation
- national origin
- race
- color
- religion
- creed
- public assistance status
- political beliefs

You can file a complaint and ask for help in filing a complaint in person or by mail, phone, fax, or email at:
Rebecca Fuller
Civil Rights Coordinator
PrimeWest Health
3905 Dakota St
Alexandria, MN 56308
Toll Free: 1-866-431-0801
TTY: 1-800-627-3529 or 711
Fax: 1-320-762-8750
Email: rebecca.fuller@primewest.org

American Indian Health Statement
American Indians can continue or begin to use tribal and Indian Health Services (IHS) clinics. We will not require prior approval or impose any conditions for you to get services at these clinics. For elders age 65 years and older this includes Elderly Waiver (EW) services accessed through the tribe. If a doctor or other provider in a tribal or IHS clinic refers you to a provider in our network, we will not require you to see your primary care provider prior to the referral.