Diabetes Overview

Diabetes occurs when your body isn’t able to use and/or produce enough insulin to control your blood sugar levels. (Insulin is a hormone that allows your body to use sugar.) This leads to higher than normal levels of blood sugar. If not controlled, this can lead to serious health complications. Right now there is no cure for diabetes. However, diabetes can be managed by working with your health care team and committing to lifestyle changes.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Blood Sugar Monitoring

Two common tests your provider may use to check your blood sugar are a fasting blood sugar and a hemoglobin A1c (usually referred to as HbA1c). The fasting blood sugar test tells you how high your blood sugar is after fasting (not eating) overnight. The HbA1c shows your average blood sugar control over the past 2 – 3 months. These tests help your provider know how well your treatment plan is working.

You may need to test your blood sugar levels at home using a blood sugar monitor (glucometer). Your provider or diabetes educator can teach you how to do it. Your treatment plan will tell you how often you should check it and what to do based on the result. Keep a log of these results, making sure to include the date, time, reading, and whether you were fasting. Bring the log to all your health care appointments.

Working with Providers

Visit your provider regularly. Your health care provider can help you manage your diabetes. You should have an appointment every 3 – 6 months to have your weight and blood pressure checked and to get blood tests done. Your provider will also perform an exam (this includes an inspection of your feet). And, your provider will ask questions to determine how well your symptoms and blood sugar levels are being managed.

Go to a specialist if recommended. Endocrinologists are doctors who specialize in diseases of the glands. Diabetes falls into this group. Going to this type of specialist can help if you are having trouble managing your symptoms or blood sugar levels. Working with a specialist may also be a good idea if you have other health conditions that affect your diabetes. Your primary care provider can help you decide if a specialist would be helpful for you.

Create a treatment plan and an action plan. Your provider will help you develop and manage a treatment plan tailored to you. It can include medications, diet, exercise, lab work, a retinal eye exam (by an eye care professional), and other interventions. Your provider can also help you develop an action plan to help you remember what to do at home if your blood sugar readings are abnormal or if you are having symptoms. You can find a sample diabetes action plan to fill out with your provider at www.primewest.org/diabetes. Click on Diabetes Action Plan.

“Following your treatment plan will help prevent complications and will let you live a more active lifestyle. Working closely with your provider will keep your diabetes under control. This will give you more time to focus on your family and activities that you love.”

Source: MedlinePlus
There are many changes you can make to help control your diabetes. Making dietary changes, exercising, quitting smoking, and caring for your feet are all things you can do!

**Eat a healthy diet**
Following a healthy diet tailored to your needs helps you control your blood sugar and feel better—and it decreases your risk of complications from uncontrolled diabetes. There is no “one-size-fits-all” diet, which can make meal planning hard. But you don’t have to figure it out on your own! Talk to your provider about getting a referral to a nutritionist, licensed dietician, or diabetes educator who can help you.

You can also visit the website of the American Diabetes Association (ADA), [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org), to find good information about nutrition and meal planning. The ADA also has an online tool called “Diabetes Food Hub.” With it, you can look up nutrition information to help with meal planning. Plus, there are hundreds of great recipes you can try! You can find this tool at [www.diabetesfoodhub.org](http://www.diabetesfoodhub.org).

If you have a smartphone, consider looking for apps that might be helpful. One example is Glucose Buddy. This free app for Android and iPhone lets you track your food, insulin doses, blood sugar readings, and more. It even creates graphs to show your blood sugar over time. Your provider may be able to recommend other apps. Keep in mind that not all apps are free.

**Stay active**
Muscle uses sugar better than fat does. This means your body will be able to process and use sugar more efficiently if you lose weight and build muscle through exercise. In addition to helping control your blood sugar levels, regular exercise helps you stay healthy overall. Your provider can help you find the kinds of exercise that are right for you. If you take insulin or oral diabetes medication, ask your provider whether you need to change the dose before exercising to prevent your blood sugar from dropping too low.

**Kick the smoking habit**
If you smoke, one of the best things you can do is quit. People with diabetes who smoke have a much harder time controlling their blood sugar levels than those who don’t. Smoking also places you at a higher risk for heart disease; nerve damage; and kidney, vision, and circulation problems. Problems with circulation can be especially damaging to your feet.

If you need help quitting, talk to your provider. They can write you prescriptions for over-the-counter products like gum and patches. Your provider can also write prescriptions for medication to help you quit. Review the options with your provider. You can also visit [www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov) to find tools and tips, chat with an expert, and build a quit plan. Many people are unable to quit on their first try, so don’t give up! Your health care team and your friends and family can all help support you as you kick the habit!

**Check your feet**
Diabetes can damage the blood vessels and nerves in your feet. It can also contribute to foot injuries, infections, and wounds that don’t easily heal. Do the following to help prevent foot problems related to diabetes:

- Check your feet every day to make sure there aren’t any open cuts or sores.
- Follow up with your provider regularly to help keep your blood sugar and blood pressure levels under control.
- Protect your feet with well-fitting socks and shoes.
- Avoid walking barefoot. This is especially important when walking on hot surfaces like hot pavement.
- Tell your provider about any new foot injuries or problems right away. Don’t try to handle foot injuries or problems on your own.
- Ask your provider if it is safe for you to cut your own toenails or if a foot doctor (podiatrist) should help with nail care.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), MedlinePlus, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive Kidney Diseases
How to Care for Someone with Diabetes

- Educate yourself about diabetes. Read books, find information on the American Diabetes Association’s website at www.diabetes.org, and get information from your provider’s office or a diabetes educator. You can also join a support group.
- Encourage healthy changes, but don’t push. You can’t make people change, you can only support them.
- Partner with the person to make lifestyle changes. It can be easier to make changes when someone is by your side—and it will benefit you both!
- If the person you care for agrees, attend appointments and educational classes. Two sets of ears are often better than one!

Diabetes and Complications

Managing your diabetes by being careful and making the right choices helps prevent many health problems. Lifestyle changes help control blood sugar levels—and that helps prevent high blood pressure. (Read more about lifestyle changes on page 2.) High blood pressure can increase the risk for or worsen the following complications of diabetes:

- Vision problems or blindness
- Foot injuries and impaired healing (which can lead to amputation)
- Heart attack and stroke
- Sexual dysfunction
- Numbness, tingling, and nerve pain
- Kidney damage that could require dialysis or kidney transplant

Work with your provider and follow your treatment plan to help prevent complications.

Sources: MedlinePlus

Medications

In addition to lifestyle changes, some people need medication to control their diabetes. Oral medications work best when paired with meal planning and regular exercise. Some people take one type of oral medication. Others need 2 or 3 different ones to control their blood sugar.

Oral medications may not control your blood sugar levels. Or, your body may not make enough insulin. In these cases, you may need insulin injections. There are also injectable medications that work with insulin. They help keep your blood sugar levels from rising after meals.

If your provider prescribes medication, it is very important to take it as directed. If you don’t, it can cause harmful blood sugar levels. Tell your provider right away if the instructions don’t make sense or you don’t feel you can safely take your medication.

Sources: MedlinePlus, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive Kidney Diseases

Care Coordination and Case Management: We’re Here for You

PrimeWest Health’s Care Coordination and Case Management programs help keep members healthy. They let us work with you and your health care providers to make sure you get the services you need. Your care coordinator or case manager can do the following:

- Help when you have questions about your health care or prescriptions
- Schedule medical appointments as needed
- Promote good health practices that may prevent problems
- Help arrange services you need to stay safe and healthy at home

Take advantage of these programs! If you need help getting the care and services you need, let your care coordinator or case manager know. If you don’t know who your care coordinator or case manager is, call one of the following:

- Member Services at 1-866-431-0801
- Jennifer at 1-888-588-4420 ext. 5342
- TTY users call 1-800-627-3529 or 711

These calls are free.
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.

Malaysia: 012-4733608, 014-5276918, 010-2232075, 011-85058680, 019-6133610, 014-6013021, 019-6013021
TTY in Malaysia: 019-6013021

Please contact the translation services provided by the Ministry of Federal Territories and Urban Development.

주의: 이 문서에 대한 한국어 번역을 원하시면 02-6273539를 이용하십시오.

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.

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

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

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

You have the right to file a discrimination complaint if you believe you were treated in a discriminatory way by PrimeWest Health. You can file a complaint and ask for help 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

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 or TTY 1-800-627-3529 or 711. The call is free.**

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 or TTY 1-800-627-3529 or 711. The call is free.**

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 also contact any of the following 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:
Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Midwest Region
233 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 240
Chicago, IL 60601
Customer Response Center: Toll-free: 800-368-1019
TDD Toll-free: 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 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
- religion (in some cases)
- age
- disability (including physical or mental impairment)
- sex (including sex stereotypes and gender identity)
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. 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 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

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.