

Diabetes – Reducing risks for problems

Why am I at risk for problems?

When you have poorly controlled diabetes, you are at risk for developing problems such as a heart attack, stroke or nerve damage. You can help prevent these problems by having good control of your diabetes and seeing your health care provider regularly.

Blood vessels, heart and stroke

Diabetes may cause blood vessels to become narrow inside. This is called atherosclerosis. A build up of fat and other materials inside the blood vessels causes this problem. Atherosclerosis can lead to a heart attack or stroke.

You can help reduce your risk by:

- following a meal plan low in saturated fats
- following an activity program
- stopping smoking if you smoke
- taking medication when prescribed



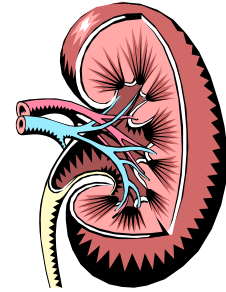
Blood pressure

Diabetes may cause an increase in your blood pressure. High blood pressure can lead to a stroke. Have your blood pressure checked every doctor's visit. If you take medication for high blood pressure, take it regularly. If you smoke, try to stop as smoking can cause high blood pressure.



Kidneys

Diabetes and high blood pressure can damage the tiny blood vessels in the kidneys that act as filters to remove waste. Good blood pressure and blood sugar control can help prevent damage. Medications are often used to protect the kidneys. Be sure to get yearly blood and urine tests to check your kidneys.



Eyes

There may be no signs that warn you when there is a problem with your eyes. A change in the blood vessels of your eyes is called retinopathy. Early discovery and treatment of retinopathy can prevent damage to your eyes. This is why you need to have your eyes checked each year by an eye doctor called an optometrist or eye specialist called an ophthalmologist.



The eye doctor or specialist will put drops in your eyes to dilate your pupils. He or she will look at the back of each eye to see if the blood vessels are changing. OHIP covers the cost of an optometrist visit every year.

Teeth

When you have diabetes, you can have problems with your teeth and gums because of the extra sugar in your blood.

You should brush and floss your teeth each day. You should see a dentist every 6 months. Tell your dentist that you have diabetes.

