

Women and diabetes

As a woman with diabetes, what's the most important thing I should keep in mind?

You should be extra careful about your heart health. Your life could depend on it. Although treatments for heart disease have become much better, women with diabetes are more likely to die of heart disease than they were 30 years ago.

But there's a lot you can do to take control of your health. Here are just a few ways to reduce your risk of heart disease:

- **Manage the ABCs of diabetes**—To protect yourself from heart disease, you need to think about more than just blood sugar control. Work with your health care provider on a plan to help you control:
 - A1C—a measure of your blood sugar that is done at the health care provider's office
 - Blood pressure
 - Cholesterol
- **Get more active**—Regular exercise is a great way to help get your ABCs under control. If you are new to exercise, you can start with just 5 minutes a day. Slowly work your way up to at least 30 minutes a day for at least 5 days a week. Always ask your health care provider before starting an exercise program.

Heart disease is a very serious health risk for women with diabetes. You can lower your risk by keeping your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol under control.



- **Watch what you eat**—The foods you eat can have a big effect on your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol. Ask your health care provider for a plan you can live with.

Changing your eating habits may be hard at first, but you can do it. A healthy diet to manage your blood sugar should also help you manage your blood pressure and cholesterol. And there are many ways to prepare tasty, healthy meals that your whole family will enjoy.

There are many sources for diabetes-friendly recipes. Your local bookstore, library, or the American Diabetes Association (diabetes.org or 1-800-342-2383) are great places to start.

- **Put your health first**—Many women have a long list of things to do—and often put taking care of themselves last on that list. But if you have diabetes, getting and staying healthy should come first. You will have more energy to do the things you love to do. And you will give yourself and your family the gift of a healthier life.

Does being a woman change the way I manage my blood sugar?

It could. Women have special challenges when it comes to blood sugar control.

Your hormones can affect your blood sugar levels. That's why it may be harder to keep your blood sugar under control just before and during your period. Menopause, can make it harder to control your diabetes as well.

If you use birth control medications, you should speak to your health care provider about how these medications may affect your blood sugar. Your health care provider can also see whether your diabetes medicine interferes with your birth control medicine.

If you are having trouble managing your diabetes, talk to your health care provider. There are many ways you can work together to get your blood sugar under control.

Remember, as a woman with diabetes, you need and deserve special treatment. Put your health at the top of your "to do" list, and ask for help from your family and health care providers when you need it.

If I become pregnant, what will happen to me and the baby?

You and your health care provider can work together to keep you and your baby healthy. While you are pregnant, it is very important to keep your blood sugar under control. You will need to check your blood sugar more often and watch what you eat very closely. You should also be sure to take your medicine exactly as instructed.

Because pregnancy can make it harder to control your blood sugar, talk to your health care provider about getting your blood sugar under control before you get pregnant. Then you can be ready for the many changes to your body that come during pregnancy.

What else should I know?

You may get yeast infections that come back again. That's because the sugar in your blood helps yeast grow in your body.

Women with diabetes are at higher risk of sexual problems. These can include less interest in sex and vaginal dryness.