

# Taking Care of Your Heart

Has your health care provider said that you're at high risk for heart disease? Do you have diabetes? Have you already had a heart attack? If so, you are much more likely to have coronary artery disease (a form of heart disease), a heart attack, or a stroke. But you can take steps to prevent heart disease or lower your chances of having a heart attack. Lifestyle changes, like making smart food choices and being physically active, and taking medicine can help.

## What causes coronary artery disease?

Coronary artery disease occurs when the blood vessels to your heart become narrowed or blocked by deposits of fat and other materials. These deposits can break apart and form a blood clot. If the blood supply to your heart is reduced or cut off by a blood clot, you can have a heart attack.

## What steps can I take to prevent coronary artery disease?

You can lower your risk by keeping your “ABCs” on target with smart food choices, physical activity, and medicine. Losing weight and quitting smoking can also help. The closer your numbers are to your targets, the better your chances of preventing heart disease and cutting your risk for a heart attack.

### A is for A1C

The A1C tells you your average blood glucose over the past 2 to 3 months. Your average blood glucose is reported in 2 ways:

- A1C (as a percentage)
- estimated Average Glucose (eAG) in numbers similar to your blood glucose meter readings

American Diabetes Association (ADA) targets are listed on the following chart. Talk with your health care team about the best target for you. Write your latest result and your target here.



Medicine, along with lifestyle changes, can help you prevent a heart attack.

ADA Targets for the A1C	My Result	My Target
A1C: below 7%		
eAG: below 154 mg/dl		

### B is for blood pressure

Your blood pressure is the force of blood inside your blood vessels. When your blood pressure is high, your heart has to work harder than it should. Write your latest result and your target here.

ADA Blood Pressure Target	My Result	My Target
Below 130/80 mmHg		

### C is for cholesterol

Your cholesterol numbers tell you how much fat, also called lipid, is in your blood.

- LDL cholesterol, also called “bad” cholesterol, can clog your blood vessels and lead to heart disease.
- HDL cholesterol, also called “good” cholesterol, helps protect your heart.
- Triglycerides, another kind of blood fat, raise your risk for heart disease.

See the chart below for the ADA targets. Write the results of your latest blood fat check here.

Type of Blood Lipid	ADA Targets (mg/dl)	My Results	My Targets
LDL cholesterol	below 100*		
HDL cholesterol	above 40 (for men)		
	above 50 (for women)		
Triglycerides	below 150		

\*If you already have heart and blood vessel disease, your LDL target is below 70.

## How can I reach my ABC targets?

You can help reach your targets when you

- make smart food choices
- lose weight if you need to
- exercise and are as active as possible
- quit smoking
- take medicines (if needed)

### Make smart food choices

Changing what you eat can make a big difference in your blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels. Below are some ways to make smart food choices. Place a check mark next to the steps you're willing to try. To learn more about how to make these changes, talk with your health care team.

- Limit saturated fat (found in fatty meats, poultry skin, butter, 2% or whole milk, ice cream, cheese, palm oil, coconut oil, lard, and shortening).
- Eat as little trans fats as possible. Trans fats are found in some crackers, snack foods, cookies, donuts, stick margarine, some tub margarines, and foods with hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oil.
- Eat less salt, also called sodium.
- Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day.

- Cut back on high-cholesterol foods (such as egg yolks, high-fat meat and poultry, liver and other organ meats, and high-fat dairy products like whole milk).
- Eat fish 2 or 3 times a week. Choose fish high in the kind of fat that protects your heart (such as albacore tuna, mackerel, rainbow trout, sardines, and salmon).

### Lose weight or take steps to prevent weight gain

- Cut down on calories and fat.
- Try to be more physically active than you are now.

### Be physically active

- Check with your doctor before you start a new routine. Find out which activities will be safe.
- Aim for a total of about 30 minutes of aerobic exercise, such as brisk walking, most days of the week.

### If you smoke, quit

- Talk with your health care team about how to quit.
- Go to a “quit-smoking” class.

### Take medicines

Medicines can help you reach your ABC targets and lower your risk of heart disease. You may need several medicines to stay on track. Your health care provider can tell you which medicines are best for you.

Aspirin can also help lower your risk of heart disease. Ask your provider whether you should take a low-dose aspirin every day.

### Real-Life Stories from People with Diabetes

After my heart attack last year, I finally started taking my health seriously. Before that, I hadn't paid much attention to my diabetes. But now I try to eat right and exercise, and I take several pills a day to keep my blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol on target. I want to be around for a long time!

— Roberto H., age 70 • type 2 diabetes

Provided By

