Living Longer with Heart Disease

If you would like to receive support or need more information, please contact us at:

The Mended Hearts, Inc.
Merry Acres Executive Building
1500 Dawson Road
Albany, GA 31707
1-888-HEART99

www.mendedhearts.org

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

- What type of diabetes do I have?
- What tests do I need?
- What is my glucose level?
- What is my A1C level?
- How would I know if I have heart disease?
- What foods are best for me to eat and what foods should I avoid?
- What changes should I make to my exercise routine?
- Are there medications I can take?
- What treatment options are available for me with the risks and benefits of each option?
- How can I monitor my diabetes, and can I monitor at home?

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What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a chronic disease where your body does not properly turn food into energy for your body to use. When people have diabetes, their body can’t make enough of a hormone called insulin or can’t properly use the insulin it has. Insulin helps your body digest sugars that come from what you eat and drink. Without enough insulin, sugar builds up in your blood. Over time, that sugar buildup damages your nerves, blood vessels, heart, and kidneys.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that more than 29 million Americans have diabetes, or about 1 of every 11 people. About 8 million of them don’t know they have diabetes. Another 86 million—more than 1 in 3 Americans older than 20 years—have prediabetes, a condition in which a person’s blood sugar is high, but not yet high enough to trigger diabetes.

Type 2 Diabetes is the most common form of diabetes that typically is seen in older adults but can begin at any age. It is a long-term chronic condition where the body doesn’t regulate sugar or use it as fuel properly. Some patients can manage their blood sugar through diet and exercise, but others need medications to help.

Diabetes and Heart Disease

Diabetes increases your risk of heart disease. Risk factors for diabetes, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and obesity, are also risk factors for heart disease. People with type 2 diabetes are twice as likely to develop heart failure. And people who have heart failure are more likely to be hospitalized and have worse long-term outcomes.

Type 2 diabetes can also damage your kidneys. This is another example of how the body works together and why managing your blood sugar levels is so important. If kidney damage occurs, that can affect your blood pressure, and that can affect your heart.

Managing Diabetes

Managing your diabetes and glucose levels is a very important part of taking care of your heart. Here are some things that can help:

- Educate yourself. Learn about diabetes and heart disease so you can work with your care team and make informed choices.
- Ask questions. When you have questions and concerns, ask your health care team.
- Know your numbers. It is important to monitor cholesterol numbers, blood pressure and A1C.
- Avoid refined sugars, when possible.
- Get exercise. Start with small increases in activity and work your way up to 30 minutes 5 or more times a week.
- Eat more lean protein, high fiber and fruits and vegetables.
- Follow your treatment plan, including taking all medications on schedule.
- Stay in care. See your doctor regularly.

Symptoms of Diabetes

- Increased thirst
- Increased fatigue
- Increased appetite
- Increased urination
- Weight loss
- Blurred vision

A1C is the index test to determine the amount of glucose (sugar) in your blood.

- Normal <5.7
- Prediabetes 5.8 - 6.4
- Diabetes >6.5