



Patient Information

Have Diabetes? Keep Your Heart Safe

Many people with diabetes don't know that the greatest risk they face is heart disease. That's because having diabetes increases the risk of heart disease and stroke. Diabetes is also associated with other cardiovascular risk factors, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity and insulin resistance.

This handout provides information about diabetes and its relationship with cardiovascular disease and other health ailments, as well as information about The Heart of Diabetes, a free program from the American Heart Association designed for people with diabetes.

About Diabetes

Type 2 diabetes, which is the most common form of diabetes, is a progressive disease that develops when your body doesn't produce enough insulin and does not efficiently use the insulin it does create. Insulin is a hormone that regulates levels of sugar in the blood. The inefficient use of insulin is known as insulin resistance, and more than 60 million Americans have it. One in four of these people will develop type 2 diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes occurs most frequently in people who are older than 45, are overweight, or have a family history of diabetes. Diabetes is also more common in people of African American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian American or Pacific Islander descent.

If you have a mild form of type 2 diabetes, you could have it for years and not know it. Plus, you might already have developed complications associated with the disease.

Diabetes and...

- Cardiovascular disease — The American Heart Association says that diabetes is one of the six major risk factors for cardiovascular disease. Adults with diabetes are two to four times more likely to have heart disease or a stroke than adults without diabetes.
- High blood pressure — Diabetes and high blood pressure are a common combination, and people with both face twice the risk for cardiovascular disease.
- High cholesterol — Diabetes can lower "good" cholesterol and

raise "bad" cholesterol, increasing the risk of heart disease and stroke.

- Kidney disease — Diabetes is the main cause of end-stage renal disease, which is the last stage of kidney disease and usually cannot be reversed.

Prevention

Since obesity and lack of physical activity are risk factors for type 2 diabetes, it's important to eat healthy and exercise regularly. Being overweight or obese increases your risk for diabetes. If you already have the disease, being overweight makes diabetes harder to manage. It also increases your risk for high cholesterol, high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease.

Begin with moderate lifestyle changes, such as trying to eat more fruits or vegetables in place of foods with higher fat and calories. Add physical activity to your routine slowly. The duration and frequency of activity should eventually increase to at least 30 minutes of moderate aerobic activity on most days of the week.

It's also important to avoid smoking. If you smoke now, you should quit. Smoking increases your risk for a heart attack and for developing insulin resistance. If you have diabetes, smoking is even worse because you're more likely to have nerve damage or kidney disease. In fact, you are three times more likely than nonsmokers to die of cardiovascular disease and more likely to raise your blood sugar level, which makes it harder to control diabetes.

The Heart of Diabetes Program

The American Heart Association's Heart of Diabetes program is a free educational and awareness campaign for people with type 2 diabetes and insulin resistance that provides information about the relationship among diabetes, cardiovascular disease and insulin resistance.

If you're interested in starting the program, contact The Heart of Diabetes to receive Game Plan for a Healthy Life — a toolkit that provides a 12-week plan for fitness and exercise improvement for people with diabetes, including monthly online newsletters, interactive wallpapers, recipes and more. ❖

Information adapted from The American Heart Association, available online at: www.americanheart.org.
Join The Heart of Diabetes by calling 800-AHA-USA1 (800-242-8721) or by visiting www.americanheart.org/diabetes.

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The American Heart Association's Heart of Diabetes Understanding Insulin Resistance is brought to you through an educational grant from Takeda Pharmaceuticals North America and Eli Lilly and Company.

Additional Notes:
