

# DIABETES EDUCATION: *DIABETES AND YOUR HEALTH*

## HOW OFTEN DO I NEED TO SEE MY DOCTOR OR NURSE?

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You will probably need to see your doctor or nurse **at least three or four times each year**. Sometimes, you will need more visits to learn how to manage your diabetes or if your blood sugar is not well-controlled.

During your visits, your doctor or nurse will want to measure your blood sugar using a test called an “**A1c**.” This test is able to show you your average blood sugar level over the last few months. The results of an A1c test will help your doctor or nurse decide whether your treatment needs to be adjusted.

During some of your visits, your doctor or nurse might also measure things like your **blood pressure** or **cholesterol**. It is very important that you keep all of your appointments with your doctor or nurse.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KEEP MY BLOOD SUGAR CLOSE TO NORMAL?

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Having **high blood sugar** can cause serious problems over time. It can lead to:

- » Nerve damage
- » Kidney disease
- » Vision problems (or blindness)
- » Pain or loss of feeling in the hands and feet
- » The need to have fingers, toes, or other body parts removed (amputated)
- » Heart disease and strokes

Having **low blood sugar** can cause problems, too. It can make your heart beat fast, and make you shake and sweat. If blood sugar gets really low, it can cause more serious problems. People with very low blood sugar can get headaches, get very sleepy, pass out, or even have seizures.

## WHAT IS IT IMPORTANT TO KEEP MY BLOOD PRESSURE AND CHOLESTEROL LOW?

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People with diabetes have a much **higher risk** of heart disease and strokes than people who do not have diabetes. Keeping your blood pressure and cholesterol low can help lower those risks.

If your doctor or nurse puts you on blood pressure or cholesterol medicine, be sure to **take them as directed**. Studies show that these medicines can prevent heart attacks, strokes, and even death.