EquaHeart

Diabetes and your heart

Over time, elevated blood glucose (blood sugar) damages blood vessels. Protecting your heart is therefore as important as managing your blood glucose.

3×
People with diabetes are over three times more likely to be hospitalized with cardiovascular disease

40%
Diabetes contributes to 40% of heart attacks and 30% of strokes

30%
of Canadians live with diabetes or prediabetes

1 The ABCDES of heart protection

A — A1C
7% or less
Average blood glucose over about three months.

B — Blood pressure
Below 130/80
Hypertension adds to vascular damage.

C — Cholesterol
LDL below 2.0 mmol/L
Most adults with diabetes are advised to take a statin.

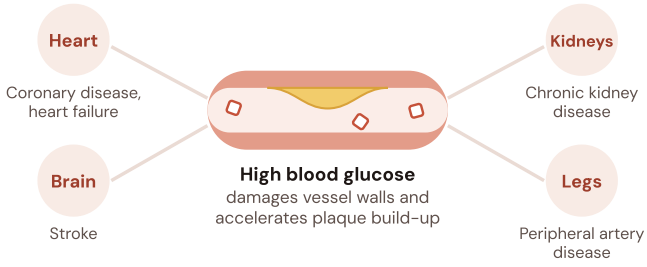
D — Drugs
Cardiorenal protection
Medications that protect the heart and kidneys.

E — Exercise and eating
150 minutes a week
Plus resistance training two to three times a week.

S — Screening, smoking, stress
Annual checks
Eyes, kidneys and feet. Stop smoking. Manage stress.

Targets from Diabetes Canada. Individual targets may differ, for example in older adults or with frequent hypoglycemia (low blood sugar).

2 How diabetes affects the body



Diabetes often occurs with hypertension and high cholesterol, which further increase risk.

3 Protective medications

Depending on your age and health, your care team may recommend:

- **A statin** for most adults aged 40 and older.
- **An ACE inhibitor or ARB** to protect the heart and kidneys, particularly from age 55 or if complications are present.
- **An SGLT2 inhibitor or GLP-1 receptor agonist** if you have cardiovascular or kidney disease (SGLT2 inhibitors also for heart failure). These lower blood glucose and protect the heart.

4 Daily habits and routine care

- Choose vegetables, high-fibre and low-glycemic-index foods, lean protein and healthy fats.
- If you smoke, ask for support to stop. Smoking greatly increases cardiovascular risk.
- Aim for 150 minutes of aerobic activity a week, plus resistance training two to three times.
- Have yearly eye, kidney and foot examinations, and an ECG every 3 to 5 years if over 40.

911 **Heart attack symptoms may be mild or atypical with diabetes:** shortness of breath, unusual fatigue, nausea, sweating, or discomfort in the chest, arm, jaw or back. **Call 911**, even if symptoms seem mild.

Sources: Diabetes Canada Clinical Practice Guidelines; ABCDES of Diabetes Care quick reference guide (diabetes.ca). Diabetes Canada, Diabetes in Canada backgrounder, 2024. HealthLink BC, Silent heart attack.
This guide is general information and does not replace advice from your healthcare provider.

equaheart.com
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