

Do you have diabetes? Or do you have pre-diabetes and want to know more about it? **Diabetes Matters** is just for you, to help you learn how to live well with diabetes and prevent complications.

Know Your Diabetes ABCs

A is for A1c (blood sugar level)

The A1c test shows the average level of sugar in your blood over the past 2 to 3 months. This is called your blood glucose level (or hemoglobin A1c). Doctors use this test to check if your blood sugar is at a normal level. Keeping your A1c at a normal, healthy level is the most important way to prevent diabetes-related complications.



A normal A1c level is under 5.7%. If your A1c level is over 5.7%, it means that your blood sugar is too high. When your A1c level is too high, it can cause permanent damage to your kidneys, heart, eyes and nerves.



What causes unhealthy levels of blood sugar?

When you have diabetes, the following conditions can cause your A1c level to rise above normal. It is important that you talk to your doctor about these conditions, and ask how you can prevent or control them.

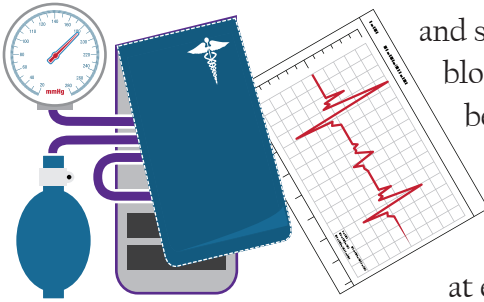
- ☹ Eating too many carbohydrates (food with high amounts of sugar and starches)
- ☹ Feeling a lot of stress
- ☹ Not getting enough exercise
- ☹ Taking medicines that can raise your A1c level
- ☹ Not receiving treatment

Know Your Diabetes ABCs

B is for Blood Pressure

Blood pressure refers to the force of the blood's movement in your arteries as it circulates through your body. It is normal for your blood pressure to go up and down during the day. A stressful moment, for example, can cause your blood pressure to go up. But if it stays high over a long period of time, it can increase your risk

for heart attack, kidney disease and stroke. You may have high blood pressure and not know it because it usually does not cause physical symptoms. This is why it is important to have your blood pressure checked at every doctor's visit. Your blood pressure should be under 140/80, unless your doctor tells you differently.



< 140/80

What causes high blood pressure?

Usually, it's difficult for doctors to identify the exact cause of someone's high blood pressure. But they do know that the following conditions can cause high blood pressure:

- ☹ Being very overweight
- ☹ Drinking too much alcohol
- ☹ Eating too much salt
- ☹ Having a family history of high blood pressure

C is for Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a type of blood fat (lipid) that your body produces naturally to help your cells work properly. Meat and dairy food products also have cholesterol. There are two types of cholesterol: low-density lipoprotein (LDL), called “bad cholesterol” and high-density lipoprotein (HDL), called “good cholesterol.” If you have diabetes it is important to get cholesterol screening tests regularly, to measure your levels of LDL and HDL. Your doctor can explain what your cholesterol results mean.



HDL



LDL ↓ 100 $\frac{\text{mg}}{\text{dL}}$



LDL ↑ 100 $\frac{\text{mg}}{\text{dL}}$

Having too much LDL in your body is bad because it builds up in your blood vessels. If you have diabetes, this increases your risk for atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) which can lead to heart disease and stroke. A normal level of LDL is under 100 mg/dL.

How can I keep my LDL “bad cholesterol” level low?

Eating foods with HDL, the good cholesterol, helps remove the build-up of bad cholesterol from your blood vessels. It is good to have a high level of HDL.

In some cases, doctors will prescribe medicines to help lower their bad cholesterol. But even with prescription medicines, it is important to exercise and eat healthy to keep your bad cholesterol levels low.

Prevent Complications

When you have diabetes, or pre-diabetes, you have to take extra care to stay healthy to avoid complications. When you take care of what you eat, you can control your blood sugar and help prevent complications.

Eat Healthy

The best way to control your diabetes is to eat healthy.

Here are examples of foods you should eat on a regular basis:

- 😊 Fresh fruits like nectarines, oranges, apples, bananas, peaches.
- 😊 Drink water throughout the day. You can slice lemons or cucumbers to put into your water bottles for additional flavor.
- 😊 Drink green tea.
- 😊 Choose whole wheat grains versus white bread or white bleached flour.
- 😊 Eat peanut/almond butter – nut butters keep you feeling full longer from the combination of protein and fat.
- 😊 Choose unsalted nuts (almonds, pistachios, peanuts) for snacks.
- 😊 Try Greek yogurt (plain) topped with granola, fruits or drizzled with honey – plain yogurt has fewer carbohydrates.

Exercise Regularly

Being physically active should be a regular part of your life. Try to get 2½ hours a week of moderate to intense activity. If you have a health condition that makes it difficult to get 2 ½ hours of exercise, do as much as you can and that is safe. Start slow and work your way up. Always ask your doctor about your exercise activity, before starting an exercise program.

Here are some ways you can add more activity to your day:

- 😊 Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- 😊 Start a garden
- 😊 Walk around the neighborhood with your family or get an exercise buddy
- 😊 Take a walking break during the work day
- 😊 Go swimming at your local pool
- 😊 Try a dance class –salsa, tango, square dancing
- 😊 Get off the bus one to two stops early and walk the rest of the way

Diabetes Resource Guide

These classes & support groups are free for HPSM members.

Pre-Diabetes, Introduction to Diabetes, Pre-natal Nutrition, Food Guide Pyramid for Diabetes

These courses are offered for patients who have their primary care provider within the San Mateo County Health System or referred by their physicians at Fair Oaks Wellness Center.

 Fair Oaks Wellness Clinic: **650-364-6010** ext **8180**

Comprehensive Self-Management of Diabetes - 10 Hour Class

 Sequoia Hospital, Redwood City, **650-367-5213**

St. Luke's Diabetes Outpatient Services

Meet with staff for complete outpatient services such as screening, individual care instructions, meal planning and resources for managing your diabetes. Staff is bilingual and work closely with referring primary care provider. You must be referred by your primary care provider within the St. Luke's Hospital system.

 St. Luke's Hospital, San Francisco, **415-641-6826**

Diabetes Group Visit

Learn information about managing blood sugar and a healthy diet. The first and third Wednesday of the month classes are held in English. The second and fourth Wednesdays of the month classes are held in Spanish.

 San Mateo Medical Center, Donna Barrett, RN, CDE, **650-573-2481**

Diabetes Support Group

 Mills Peninsula, San Mateo, **650-696-4913**

 Seton Hospital, Daly City, **650-991-6607**

Sweet Success

A program especially for women who have diabetes and are planning a pregnancy and or are pregnant or developed gestational diabetes during pregnancy.

 Mills Peninsula, **650-696-5469**

Diabetes Matters is published as a community service for the friends and patrons of Health Plan of San Mateo, 801 Gateway Blvd., Ste 100, South San Francisco, CA 94080, telephone **800-750-4776**, website www.hpsm.org. Information in **Diabetes Matters** comes from a wide range of medical experts and is designed for educational purposes only. You should not use the information to diagnose or treat any medical condition. Please consult your doctor if you have questions or concerns about specific content that may affect your health. Models may be used in photos and illustrations. For free brochures on diabetes, healthy eating or physical activity, call the **Health Education Line** at **650-616-2165**.

Thank you for reading **Diabetes Matters**, our newsletter on living healthy with diabetes! **Diabetes Matters** is for you, please let us know what you think about it! Write to us at

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or email us at **HealthEducationRequest@hpsm.org**.

Sources

- ① Quick Breakfast Ideas. American Diabetes Association
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- ① All About Cholesterol. American Diabetes Association
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- ① Diabetes Prevention: 5 Tips for Taking Control. Mayo Clinic
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