

# How diabetes can affect your body



Diabetes can affect many parts of your body. **When blood sugar stays high, your eyes, heart, kidneys, and nerves can be harmed.** Taking good care of yourself today may help you avoid problems in the future.

## Heart problems

High blood sugar may damage your heart and blood vessels. It may also raise your risk for heart attack or stroke.

## Kidney problems

When your blood sugar or blood pressure are high, it may lead to kidney damage. Over time, this may cause your kidneys to stop working. Some people with kidney problems may need a treatment called **dialysis (dye-AL-a-sis)** to do some of the work their kidneys used to do. Others may need a new kidney.

## Eye problems

High blood sugar and high blood pressure may lead to damaged blood vessels in the retina (the back part of the eye). This is called **retinopathy (ret-tin-AH-pa-thee)**. Over time, eye problems can make it hard to see or may even cause blindness.

## Foot problems

Diabetes may harm the nerves in your feet, a condition called **diabetic neuropathy (dahy-uh-bet-ik noo-rop-uh-thee)**. This can make them feel numb or tingly. It can also keep them from feeling heat, cold, or pain.

Damaged nerves can cause poor blood flow to your feet. This makes it harder for a cut or sore to heal and can lead to amputation.

Your healthcare provider should examine your feet at every visit.

## Mouth problems

High blood sugar can cause infections in your mouth, which may lead to pain and tooth loss. Mouth infections can also make it harder to keep your blood sugar low.

# Preventing health problems caused by diabetes

Managing your diabetes may help you prevent health problems caused by diabetes. The chart below can help you keep track of the steps your healthcare provider may suggest.



**Take this chart to your next visit. Ask your healthcare provider to fill it out with you.**

Steps I can take	How often should I do this?	What is my goal?
<b>Example:</b> Check my blood sugar at home	<b>Example:</b> <i>Check every morning, or as often as my doctor prescribes</i>	<b>Example:</b> <i>Before meals 80-130 mg/dl (or what my doctor recommends)</i>
Check my blood sugar at home		
Check my feet for sores, cuts, or blisters that are not healing		
Check my blood pressure		
Check my mouth for signs of problems; have my dentist clean and check my mouth		
Have my A1c and blood lipids (cholesterol and triglycerides) checked		
Have my blood and urine checked for kidney disease		
Have a comprehensive eye exam		

**To learn more about diabetes-related health problems, visit the American Diabetes Association website at [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org) or call 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383).**

