

Diabetes and Heart Disease

Diabetes is a multifaceted condition that affects more than one system in your body. Balancing your blood sugar ([glucose](#)) is only one part of treating diabetes. You should also try to maintain a healthy heart, as adults with diabetes are [2 to 4 times more likely](#) to have cardiovascular disease (CVD) as adults without diabetes.

The Link between Diabetes and Heart Disease

Diabetes often doesn't exist by itself. There are other risk factors that can indicate whether you are at risk for CVD.

People who have diabetes might have [high levels of cholesterol](#) in the blood, with a high LDL or "bad" cholesterol and a low HDL or "good" cholesterol, and high triglycerides. People who have all three might display premature coronary heart disease. Reasons why people with diabetes have high cholesterol are a fattening diet as well as a condition called [diabetic dyslipidemia](#), which often pairs with [insulin resistance](#). While cholesterol levels can rise as you age, often people are unaware of these high levels and must have a blood test for them to be detected.

People with diabetes might have [high blood pressure](#). When people have both high blood pressure and diabetes, this [doubles their risk](#) of CVD and stroke. Blood pressure can also rise with age and weight.

Another risk factor is [obesity](#). If you are very overweight, this increases your chance of developing insulin resistance, which can be a hallmark of type 2 diabetes but can also occur with type 1 diabetes. Obesity and insulin resistance can in turn cause high blood pressure.

Lack of exercise can also contribute to CVD. Being physically inactive can also be a factor in the onset of type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and insulin resistance.

People with diabetes can be at risk if they have [higher glucose levels](#) that are out of the normal range. These levels do not even have to be extremely high, as a [recent study](#) discovered. The study examined people with acute heart failure who arrived at the hospital with only slightly higher blood glucose levels, finding out that they could be at a higher risk of later developing diabetes and early death. While researchers have long known that high blood glucose levels can cause heart disease, for the first time a research study concluded that heart failure can be an early predictor of diabetes.

How You Can Maintain Heart Health

If you have diabetes, the best way to keep your heart healthy and strong is by paying close attention to your glucose levels and blood pressure. You should also maintain a [healthful diet](#) that lowers your glucose and LDL cholesterol levels and [increase your physical activity](#). Exercise can yield countless benefits that include lowering your glucose levels and insulin resistance as well as strengthening your cardiac muscle.