

MAY 2021

# DIABETES CLINIC NEWSLETTER

A monthly newsletter by University of Illinois Extension  
Serving Livingston, McLean & Woodford Counties



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## Diabetes self-care

What does diabetes self-care look like?

For some people, self-care is going for daily morning swims at the local community center; for others, self-care is having family or friends over for dinner, tidying up the house to avoid stressful clutter, or sitting down to watch a movie after a long day at work. Self-care is an important part of all of our lives to help us recognize what we need in order to be our healthiest, happiest selves. For people with diabetes, there are additional self-care tips and techniques beyond physical health and stress management that are important to keep in mind when managing your health. In this Diabetes Clinic newsletter, we'll discuss self-care related to foot health, eye health, kidney health, and poor circulation. In addition, we'll talk about the importance of advocating for your health at the doctor's office and how to prepare to take care of yourself and manage your diabetes on the days you're feeling sick.



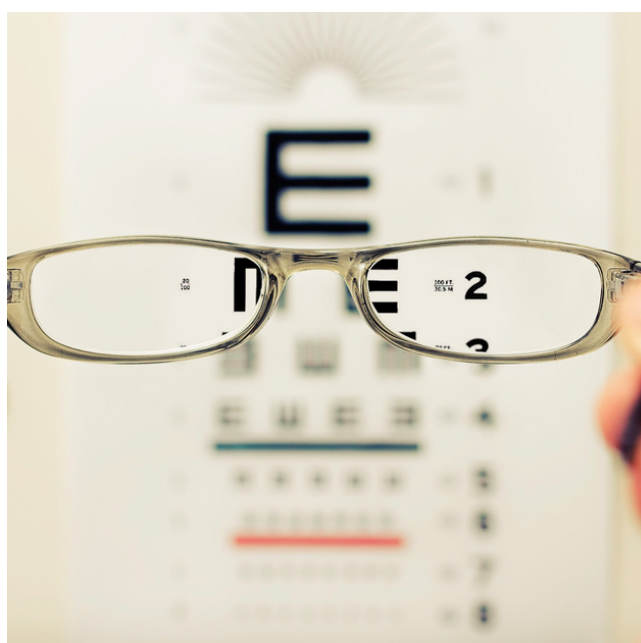
**Illinois  
Extension**

# Taking care of your body

People with diabetes are more prone to certain health conditions than the general population. Knowing how to care for your body can help keep health risks from becoming serious.

## Eye health

According to the *American Diabetes Association*, diabetes retinopathy, glaucoma, and cataracts are the eye conditions most commonly diagnosed in people with diabetes. Although some of these conditions have symptoms like blurred vision, headaches, or seeing halos around light, oftentimes people can develop these conditions without any symptoms. For this reason, it's important for people with diabetes to go to their eye doctor annually for a dilated eye exam in order to catch and diagnose health conditions early, as conditions like glaucoma can lead to irreversible vision loss. After your eye exam, make sure your eye doctor goes over the results with you - and **don't be afraid to ask questions!**



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## Foot health

When a person has diabetes, it is important for them to make a habit of checking their feet often. Ordinary foot problems like a cut or a sore may lead to more serious complications because people with diabetes often have problems with circulation and/or reduced sensitivity due to nerve damage (otherwise known as neuropathy). With limited sensitivity, it is possible for a person to have a wound on their foot without realizing it, and poor blood circulation can make it more difficult for the wound to heal.

Here are a few ways to care for your feet:

- Wash and dry your feet thoroughly every day, including between the toes
- Moisturize your feet, but avoid moisturizing between toes
- Keep your toenails trimmed and use an emery board to file down sharp edges
- Check your feet for sores, cuts, blisters, corns, or redness daily
- Wear moisture-wicking socks
- Check for sharp objects inside your shoes before putting them on
- Wear shoes that fit well
- Avoid walking barefoot
- Don't soak your feet
- Don't smoke - smoking can harden arteries and reduce blood circulation in the feet

Source: American Diabetes Association

## Poor circulation

Related to foot health, diabetes can cause blood vessels of the feet and legs to narrow and harden, reducing blood flow and circulation. Poor circulation in the feet can lead to the feet feeling cold; the safest way to warm your feet is to wear warm socks. Poor circulation can also lead to a condition known as intermittent claudication which is when a person feels pain in their calves when walking fast, up a hill, or on hard surfaces. Taking breaks should end or reduce the pain.

Smoking can harden arteries faster, so if you smoke, talk to your health care team about options for quitting. Exercise is also good for poor circulation because it increases blood flow throughout the body. Make sure to wear well-fitted shoes to avoid creating sores on your feet when you are exercising. (*American Diabetes Association*).

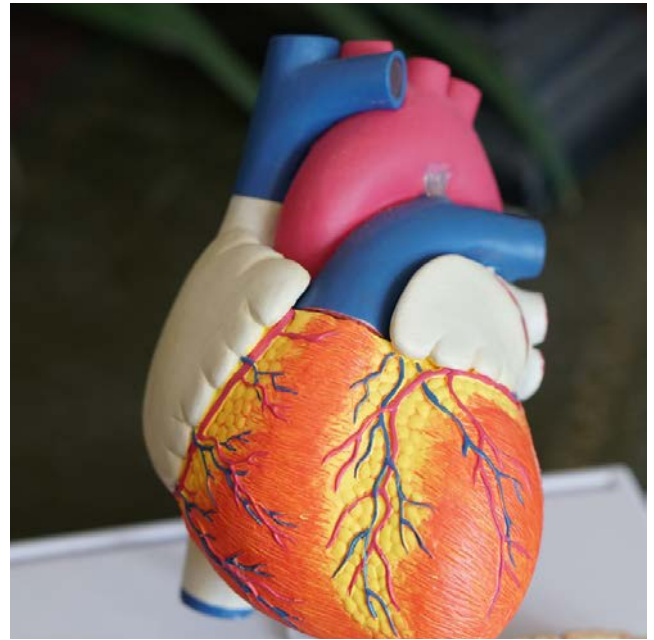
## Kidney health

With diabetes, high blood sugar levels can put strain on the filtering functions of the kidneys. Over time, this stress can lead to other issues - the kidney's filters may start to leak useful protein into the urine, waste products that should be filtered out can start to build up in the blood, and the kidneys can fail. When this happens, a person may need a kidney transplant or to have their blood filtered by a machine (this is called dialysis) (*American Diabetes Association*).

High blood pressure, poor glucose control, hereditary conditions, and diet are all risk factors for developing kidney disease. Prevention methods include keeping glucose levels controlled and following your health care team's recommendations on diet and medications you are taking to help control your glucose levels. If an individual has already developed kidney disease, keeping blood pressure under control can help to prevent or delay the progression of the disease (*National Kidney Foundation*).

## Advocate for your health

One of the best things you can do for yourself in the name of self-care is to be your own advocate. Don't understand why your health care team is recommending something new into your care plan? Just ask! Being informed about the different components of your care plan can help you feel more in control of your health and better able to manage your diabetes.



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## Overall health

While there are special self-care considerations to take when managing diabetes, don't underestimate the importance of managing your overall health! Getting adequate physical activity and eating a balanced diet can help manage blood glucose levels and reduce the risk of developing some of these health conditions.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that adults get 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week; in addition, they recommend muscle-strengthening exercises two days per week.

To eat a balanced diet, look for whole grains food options, lowfat dairy, and lean protein sources. Challenge yourself to make at least half of your plates fruits and vegetables, and vary the types of fruits and vegetables you eat for the most benefits.



# Planning for sick days

When you have a cold or the flu, your body releases hormones that can increase blood sugar levels. That's why it's important to have a plan in place for the days you feel under the weather.

## Managing blood sugar

While having diabetes does not increase a person's risk of getting sick, it can increase the risk of becoming severely ill. Managing blood sugar levels can be difficult if a person is ill enough that they cannot eat how they normally would. For that reason, making sure blood sugar levels remain in their target ranges is very important when feeling sick. Keep simple carbs stocked in your pantry or refrigerator to help manage blood sugar lows during illness.

## Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA)

When the body is not producing the proper amount of insulin, too many ketones can be produced, which puts a person at risk of developing diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA). Ketones are created by the liver as an alternative form of fuel when the body is not producing enough glucose (sugar) for energy. The American Diabetes Association recommends testing for ketones every 4-6 hours when a person is feeling sick. Contact your doctor immediately if you experience any of the following symptoms when sick:

- High blood glucose
- High ketones
- Thirst or dry mouth
- Frequent urination
- Drowsiness
- Dry or flushed skin
- Nausea, vomiting, or abdominal pain

## Plan ahead

Don't wait until you get sick to figure out what you need to do to take care of yourself. Plan ahead with your health care team to develop an action plan.

Some things to include in your plan:

- When to call your doctor
- How often to check your blood sugar
- What foods and fluids to take when you're sick; what food and fluids to have on hand
- How to adjust your insulin or medication if needed
- If and when to check your ketones
- What over-the-counter medications are okay to use for colds or the flu

Write down your plan so that you can go back to it when you're feeling sick. If you live with someone, it's a good idea to go over the plan with them as well and to let them know where they can find your action plan. It's also important to keep a list of important emergency information, like your doctor's phone number, a list of your medications, and your insurance information.



Kelly Sikkema via Unsplash

# Drop in for a virtual chat!

Every 3rd Thursday from 1:30 P.M. - 2:00 P.M.  
Join via Zoom or phone call to dive deeper into a topic from this month's newsletter.

# Sick day checklist

Making sure you have what you need on hand for a sick day can prevent you from scrambling when you're not feeling at your best. Here are a few things to consider keeping in your sick-day kit:

- Glucose meter
- Extra batteries
- Supplies for your insulin pump or continuous glucose monitor
- Ketone test strips
- A week's worth of glucose-lowering medication (don't store these longer than 30 days before use)
- Glucose tabs or gels
- Flu or cold medications that won't disrupt your diabetes management
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Questions?

Contact Jenna Smith, Nutrition & Wellness Educator and Registered Dietitian, at 309-663-8306 or [jessmith6@illinois.edu](mailto:jessmith6@illinois.edu).

# Breakfast Sandwich



Yield: 1 serving

- 1 egg or 1/4 cup egg white or egg white substitute
- 1 whole grain English muffin
- 1 slice 2% American cheese (optional)
- Chopped veggies of your choice (spinach, peppers, onions, mushrooms, etc.)

Instructions: reheat oven to 350°F. Spray muffin pan with non-stick spray. Add 1 egg or 1/4 cup egg white and veggies to each muffin tin! Cook for 10-15 minutes or until egg sets. Toast muffins. Assemble egg and cheese onto toasted muffin and enjoy!

*To enjoy later:* Let sandwich cool in freezer for 1 hour. Individually wrap tightly and store in freezer. To reheat, wrap muffin in damp paper towel and defrost in microwave for 1 minute; then reheat again at 100% power for 1-2 minutes.

**Nutrition Facts** (per serving): *Egg White Version* - 175 calories, 3.5 grams fat, 28 grams carbohydrate, 8 grams fiber, 15 grams protein. *Whole Egg* - 210 calories, 8 grams fat, 28grams carbohydrate, 8 grams fiber, 15 grams protein

## Diabetes Clinic Resources

To view additional Diabetes Clinic resources visit: [go.illinois.edu/LMWnutrition](https://go.illinois.edu/LMWnutrition)