



Staying healthy with diabetes:

4 action steps for quality care

Oregon Diabetes Resource Bank
Handouts to help people with diabetes

1 **KNOW** which tests, exams, and other care you should be getting.

According to national standards for *quality care* for diabetes, there are 10 tests, exams, and other care that *everyone* with diabetes should be getting. Staying up to date on this care will help find health problems at an early stage when the problems are still small and easier to treat.

2 **MAKE SURE** you are getting all 10 of these tests, exams, and other care as often as you should.

To help stay on schedule, keep your own written record of when you get the tests and exams. Include your goals and test results.

3 **USE** your test results to help improve your health.

Your test results give you and your doctor important information about whether your blood glucose (blood sugar), blood pressure, and cholesterol are at healthy levels. If your test results are not as good as you'd like, you can work on lifestyle changes and other ways to help improve your health.

4 **GET** the information and help you need to stay healthy with diabetes.

To do a good job of managing your health from day to day, you need to understand how diabetes affects your body and know what to do to help keep your diabetes under control. Ask your doctor, diabetes educator, and other professionals for information, handouts, and practical advice. Ask questions – and if you get an answer you don't understand, ask again.

1 KNOW which tests, exams, and other care you should be getting.

1. **A-1-C blood glucose (blood sugar) test** *(This lab test should be done every 3 to 6 months. It is different from blood testing you do yourself. The A-1-C tells what your blood glucose has been during the last few months.)*
2. **Blood pressure** *(at every office visit)*
3. **Blood test** to measure “good” cholesterol, “bad” cholesterol, and triglycerides in your blood *(once a year)*
4. **“Dilated” eye exam** to see if the blood vessels inside your eye are healthy *(once a year)*
5. **Urine test** to see if your kidneys are healthy *(once a year)*
6. **Complete foot exam** to see if the blood circulation, nerves, and skin in your feet are healthy *(a complete exam once a year, a brief foot exam at every office visit)*
7. **Exam of your gums and teeth** *(every 6 months)*
8. **Weight** *(at every office visit)*
9. **Flu shot** *(at the beginning of flu season every Fall)*
10. **Pneumococcal vaccination** *(ask your doctor if you need it)*

■ Staying up to date on these tests and exams helps you stay healthy.

Having diabetes can lead to serious health problems called “complications of diabetes.” They include heart disease and stroke, kidney problems, nerve damage, problems with eyesight, sores and skin infections on feet, and gum disease that can lead to loss of teeth. Getting the 10 tests and exams helps **prevent or delay these health problems**. The tests and exams help find any new health problems at an early stage when the problems are still small and easier to treat.

■ These tests and exams are an important part of *quality care*.

According to national standards for quality care, *everyone* with diabetes should be getting these 10 tests, exams, and other care. These quality standards are set by medical experts. They are based on results from medical research to find out which types of care work best for people with diabetes. (See references at the end of this handout.)

- **The results from your tests and exams let you and your doctor know whether your diabetes is under control.**

For example, your test results will show whether your blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol are at healthy levels. If these or other test results are not at healthy levels, it's a sign that you need to work with your doctor on ways to get your diabetes under better control.



To get the details on the care you should be getting, see this handout from the Oregon Diabetes Resource Bank: *10 tests and exams that everyone with diabetes should be getting.*

- This handout explains each test or exam, tells why it is important, and gives typical goals for test results.
- Ask your doctor or other health professional for a copy or download it for free from the Oregon Diabetes Program website (www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/diabetes/resourcebank).

2 MAKE SURE you are getting all 10 of these tests, exams, and other care as often as you should.

- **Using a “Care Card” makes it easy to keep track of your tests and exams.**



◀ This is the cover of a **fold-out wallet card** from the Oregon Diabetes Coalition.

Ask your doctor or other health professional for this card. Or download it for free from the Oregon Diabetes Program website (www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/diabetes/carecard).

You can use this card to keep track of your care by writing down the dates and results from your tests and exams. You can also write down goals you and your doctor have set for your test results.

To help you stay on schedule, the card tells how often you should have each test and exam. This card also has places to write down your medications, allergies, and emergency contact information.

3 USE your test results to help improve your health.

- **Your test results give you some important “diabetes numbers” that you can use to know your problem areas.**

Your “diabetes numbers” include your weight, your A-1-C number (blood glucose level), your blood pressure numbers, and your cholesterol and triglyceride numbers.

Keeping these numbers in the healthy range will help prevent or delay the serious health problems that can happen when you have diabetes. Talk with your doctor about what your goals should be for each of these diabetes numbers.

- **If your test results show that your diabetes numbers are not where they should be, work with your doctor on ways to improve your numbers.**

When you improve your diabetes numbers, it means that you are getting your diabetes under better control. Getting your diabetes under good control is the key to staying healthy with diabetes.



Get help from your doctor and other health professionals on what you need to do to improve your diabetes numbers.

- Lifestyle changes, such as eating healthier foods and getting more exercise, are two of the *best ways* to improve your diabetes numbers and overall health.
- Your doctor might prescribe new medications or make changes in the medications you are taking.

- **It’s worth the effort! Even a small change can improve your health.**

If your diabetes numbers are not in the healthy range, it may take some time to make improvements. Set goals that are realistic and don’t be discouraged.

Even small changes such as losing a few pounds or lowering your blood pressure by a small amount can help you become healthier.

If your blood glucose is too high, work on getting it down. If it goes down by just one point (such as going from 9.0 to 8.0), this can mean that your risk of long-term complications of diabetes goes down by as much as 40%. (*Source: National Diabetes Education Program.*)

4 GET the information and help you need to stay healthy with diabetes.

■ Doing your part to manage your health from day to day.

Managing diabetes from day to day means doing your best to keep your blood glucose (blood sugar), blood pressure, and cholesterol at healthy levels. It means getting to a healthy weight, staying physically active, and eating healthy foods. It includes taking any medication that has been prescribed for you.

■ To help manage your health, ask for information and advice.

Managing diabetes from day to day is a challenge. You can't do it all by yourself, and you shouldn't have to.

Staying healthy with diabetes is a *team effort*. Ask for information and help from your team of health professionals. Your team includes the doctors and nurses you see. It also includes any other professionals you see, such as diabetes educators, nutritionists, nurse practitioners, dentists, eye doctors, and exercise specialists.

- Ask for information materials to help you understand how diabetes affects your body.
- Ask for practical advice about what you should be doing to keep your diabetes under control.
- Ask questions! If you get an answer that you don't understand, ask again. Remember, it's your body and you need to understand the information and advice you are being given.

■ To learn about healthy eating, ask an expert.



When you have diabetes, good nutrition can be a complicated topic.

- To keep your blood glucose at the right level for good health, you need to eat the right *kinds* of food in the right *amounts*, at the right *times*.
- You need to understand how different foods affect your blood glucose in different ways.

To learn more about healthy eating, get help from an expert – a nutritionist or a diabetes educator. If you need help in finding one, ask your doctor.

■ **Using the “Diabetes Question Sheet” makes it easier to ask for information.**

Health care visits can be rushed. Sometimes it’s hard to remember the questions you want to ask. Sometimes it’s hard to know how to get more information.

The *Diabetes Question Sheet* can help. It’s a tool that makes it easier to ask questions and easier to make sure you get the information and answers you need.



- The *Diabetes Question Sheet* has boxes you can check to show which topics you want to talk about during a health care visit.
- It also has places to write down questions you want to ask.

Fill out your *Diabetes Question Sheet* at home and then take it with you to your appointment. Give it to the doctor or other health professional at the beginning of your visit.

The *Diabetes Question Sheet* was developed for the Oregon Diabetes Resource Bank. Ask your doctor or other health professional for this sheet. Or download it for free from the Oregon Diabetes Program website (www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/diabetes/resourcebank).

REFERENCES:

Standards of Medical Care in Diabetes – 2008.

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National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse: www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov

National Diabetes Education Program: www.ndep.nih.gov

American Diabetes Association: www.diabetes.org