



American Heart Association®

Life's Essential 8™

→ for kids

HOW TO MANAGE BLOOD SUGAR



TIPS FOR SUCCESS

UNDERSTAND BLOOD GLUCOSE

Sugars are in the foods we eat, like candy, cakes and cookies, but sugars (carbohydrates) are also in other foods that we eat like bread, pasta, rice and potatoes. Eating too many sugars can cause the sugars in our blood to rise. High sugar levels in the blood are bad for our blood vessels, liver, kidneys and other organs.¹

GLUCOSE When we eat carbohydrates and sugars, glucose (sugar) enters the bloodstream.

Insulin is a hormone made in the beta cells of the pancreas that helps the body's cells take up glucose from blood and lower blood glucose levels. Insulin is released by the body when there is glucose in the blood. It is the insulin that helps our body to use the glucose and prevents the glucose from hurting our bodies. Diabetes occurs when the body cannot make insulin (beta cells don't work) or when the body no longer "listens" to the insulin.

Type 2 diabetes is a disease that can occur in a person who eats too much sugar on a regular basis. Type 2 diabetes is harmful to the body.

Before developing Type 2 diabetes, the body develops resistance to the hormone insulin and can't use the insulin it makes efficiently. The pancreas gradually loses its ability to produce insulin. The result can be a high blood glucose level.²

TRACK LEVELS

Your doctor can check your blood and measure the glucose levels to determine if you have diabetes. If you're diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, you will need to monitor your blood sugar levels regularly and your doctor will give you medications that you have to take everyday. Not treating diabetes can harm your kidneys, liver, nerves, eyes, heart, eyes and other parts of your body.³

Visit [KnowDiabetesbyHeart.org](https://www.heart.org/learnmoreaboutdiabetes) to learn how to manage your risk for heart disease and stroke if you have diabetes.

Learn more at [heart.org/lifes8](https://www.heart.org/lifes8)

EAT SMART

Eat healthy foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, legumes, nuts, plant-based proteins, and lean animal proteins like fish and seafood.

Limit sugary foods and drinks, red or processed meats, salty foods, refined carbohydrates and highly processed foods. Healthy foods can still taste really good!⁴

MOVE MORE

Kids and teens should get at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day, including play and structured activities.⁵

LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

Practice healthy eating habits. Listen to your body- if you are hungry, make a healthy choice. When you are full, stop eating.⁶

DON'T SMOKE OR VAPE

Smoking, vaping, exposure to secondhand smoke or using tobacco can make prediabetes and diabetes harder to manage.⁷

SLEEP WELL

Not getting enough sleep can be harmful to your body and can cause health problems including high blood.

¹Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Carbohydrates and Blood Sugar

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/carbohydrates-and-blood-sugar/>

²American Heart Association, What is Diabetes, <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/diabetes/about-diabetes>

³American Heart Association, The connection between diabetes, kidney disease and high blood pressure

<https://www.heart.org/en/news/2020/11/03/the-connection-between-diabetes-kidney-disease-and-high-blood-pressure>

⁴American Heart Association, How Can I Help My Child Be More Physically Active? <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/fitness-basics/aha-recs-for-physical-activity-in-children>

⁵DiaTribe Learn, Why Smoking and Vaping Makes Diabetes Harder, <https://diatribe.org/why-smoking-and-vaping-make-diabetes-harder>

⁶The American Heart Association Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations, <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/nutrition-basics/aha-diet-and-lifestyle-recommendations>