

# Understanding the Effects of Diabetes



The American Diabetes Association (ADA) reports more than 37 million Americans have diabetes. Diabetes can put you at a higher risk for other health problems and can lead to serious complications if it is not properly treated. If you have been diagnosed with diabetes, learn how the disease affects your body.

## Your Heart

High blood sugar can damage artery walls, making them rough. This roughness can cause plaque to build up and prevent blood from flowing properly through the arteries, putting you at a higher risk for a heart attack or stroke. In addition, high blood sugar levels can cause you to be at an increased risk for high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Typically, you should have your blood pressure checked at every routine diabetes visit and your cholesterol checked annually.\*

## Eye Care

People with diabetes are prone to developing eye problems, putting you at a higher risk for a heart attack or stroke. See your eye doctor at least once a year\* for a dilated eye exam or if you experience vision problems, such as blurriness, seeing double, trouble reading, feeling pressure, seeing spots or floaters, or reduced peripheral vision.

## Foot Care

Foot care is an important part of diabetes self-care. Over a period of time, elevated blood sugars can lead to poor circulation and can cause a loss of feeling in the feet. With a loss of feeling, sores or injuries may not be felt right away and can quickly become infected.

## Caring for Your Feet

- Always wear shoes or slippers, even around the house.
- Check your feet daily.
- Keep your skin soft and smooth.
- Protect your feet from hot and cold.
- Remove your shoes and socks at every doctor visit so your doctor can examine your feet.

## Dental Care

According to ADA, there is more gum disease among people with diabetes than those without it. To fight gum disease, it is important to brush your teeth at least twice a day, floss at least once a day and see your dentist regularly. Regular checkups, at least every six months, can help prevent problems. Be sure to tell your dentist you have been diagnosed with diabetes.

The complications associated with diabetes can be delayed or even prevented with good self-management skills. Keeping regular doctor visits and following your doctor's care plan can help you live a healthy life with diabetes.

\*For benefit coverage, visit TRICARE's Covered Services page at [www.tricare.mil/coveredservices](http://www.tricare.mil/coveredservices). Ask your doctor for age recommendations and risk guidelines.



To fight gum disease, it is important to brush your teeth at least twice a day and floss at least once a day.

[www.tricare-west.com](http://www.tricare-west.com)



TRICARE is a registered trademark of the Department of Defense, Defense Health Agency. All rights reserved. PF1113x037 (10/22)

