



Diabetes Outlook

STAYING HEALTHY ■ LIVING WELL

WINTER 2008

Take Steps to Avoid Dry Skin

Having diabetes can lead to dry skin. Your body loses fluid when blood glucose is high. Nerve damage can make you sweat less, and sweat helps keep skin soft and moist. And if you live in a climate with cold, dry winter air, you can wind up with moisture-starved skin that itches and cracks, opening the way to infection.

Keeping blood glucose under good control is as critical for

your skin as it is for the rest of your body. Beyond that, these tips can save your skin from becoming dry:

- Bathe in warm water with mild soap. Avoid hot water, which removes natural skin oils. And limit your time in the tub or shower to between five and 10 minutes.
- Dry off well after bathing. Then apply a good moisturizing cream or lotion.

Just don't put moisturizer between your toes, because extra dampness there may cause fungus to grow.

- Avoid using bath oil to moisturize. It can make the tub slippery, increasing the risk for falls.
- Consider using a humidifier to add moisture to dry indoor air.
- Hydrate from the inside out by drinking plenty of fluids.



What Is Anemia?

Anemia is a condition in which the blood is low in red blood cells or in hemoglobin. Red blood cells carry oxygen that is attached to hemoglobin around the body. Without enough oxygen, tissues and organs don't work as well as they should. Here are some important facts about anemia:

- Anemia may cause people to feel tired and look pale. Other possible symptoms include dizziness, headaches, and coldness in the hands and feet.
- Severe anemia can cause breathing trouble and a rapid heartbeat. Over time, untreated anemia can put a serious strain on organs and muscles, including the heart.
- Anemia has several causes, including a lack of iron in your diet. In people with diabetes, kidney disease is another common culprit. The kidneys make a hormone called erythropoietin, which prompts bone marrow to produce red blood cells. When diseased kidneys don't make enough of this hormone, the result may be anemia.

Good Health Guidelines

For people with diabetes, it's important to have the following tests and checkups:

- Hemoglobin A1c test two to four times a year
- Blood pressure checked at every office visit
- Foot inspection at every office visit and complete sensory foot exam once a year
- Dilated retinal (eye) examination once a year
- Fasting lipid profile test at least once a year
- Urinary protein/microalbumin test once a year
- Cholesterol levels, including low-density lipoprotein and high-density lipoprotein, checked at least once a year
- Serum creatinine measured once a year
- Regular dental checkup at least twice a year

A CLOSER LOOK

A Regular Dental Checkup

Diabetes affects your whole body, and that includes your teeth and gums. Teeth are covered in a sticky film of bacteria, called plaque. Over time, plaque can build up and harden, setting the stage for inflammation and infection. High blood glucose helps the bacteria in plaque thrive, which is why people with diabetes are at risk for particularly severe gum problems.

Brushing after every meal and flossing each day can help. It's also important to have your teeth professionally checked and cleaned twice a year. At these checkups, your dentist can look for early signs of oral health problems and help you get prompt treatment, if needed.

Although these are suggested guidelines for care, please check with your benefits plan for coverage. Guidelines for children may be different. Check with your health care provider to learn which tests children need and how frequently they need them.

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Five Ways to Quit Smoking

For people who smoke, the American Cancer Society notes that quitting may be the most important step you can take toward a longer, healthier life. And when you have diabetes, the benefits of quitting are multiplied.

Both smoking and diabetes cause the blood vessels to narrow, increasing the risk for heart

disease and stroke. Smoking also speeds up diabetes-related kidney disease and nerve damage. Plus, smoking can harm blood vessels in the legs, raising the risk for amputation. Giving up smoking helps people with diabetes ward off these complications and reduces the chance of dying early.

Kicking tobacco isn't easy, and according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, most people try several times before they succeed. Here are five steps you can take to stop smoking for good:

- 1 Pick a specific day within the next month to quit.** Before the big day, get rid of all cigarettes and ashtrays in your home, car, and office. Ask other people not to smoke in these places either. Stock up on oral substitutes, such as sugarless gum, carrot sticks, or hard candy.
- 2 Tell family, friends, and coworkers about your plans to quit, and ask for their support.** Also talk with your health care provider or call the free quitline at **800-QUIT-NOW**. Getting individual, group, or phone counseling doubles your chance of lasting success.
- 3 Learn new behaviors.** If you always have a cigarette with your morning coffee, switch to juice or tea and drink it in a different place. Distract yourself from urges to smoke by calling a friend or taking a break to stretch. Also look for new ways to handle stress, such as exercising, listening to music, or reading a book.
- 4 Consider medication.** Ask your health care provider about the best option for you. Nicotine-replacement therapy gives you a controlled dose of nicotine without the other harmful chemicals in tobacco. This lets you focus on the psychological side of quitting first, without the physical symptoms. Replacement nicotine can be taken in gums, patches, lozenges, nasal sprays, or inhalers. Non-nicotine medications, such as bupropion, varenicline, and nortriptyline, are sometimes prescribed.
- 5 Prepare for slip-ups.** Don't let a minor lapse turn into a major relapse. If you smoke a cigarette, just look at what went wrong and learn from the experience. Then get right back on track. If you continue to have problems, talk with your health care provider.





PRECONCEPTION CARE for Women with Diabetes

According to the American Diabetes Association, for women with diabetes who plan to have children, the best time to start preparing yourself to care for a baby is before getting pregnant.

Preconception care—medical care before pregnancy—promotes better health for moms and babies. Without such care, women with poor diabetes control are at increased risk for miscarriage. They're also more likely to have babies with serious birth defects.

Preconception care involves a woman's primary care provider, diabetes educator, and obstetrician. These providers perform screenings to assess your health. Below is a glance at what you can expect.

Your Medical History

Part of the preconception screening process means sharing information. Your health care provider will likely ask questions about:

- Your menstrual history
- Your use of birth control
- Any past pregnancies
- Health conditions that run in your family

If it's your first visit to a new health care provider, he or she will want to know the following information about your diabetes:

- How long you've had diabetes
- What medications you take
- What your A1c levels have been
- Whether you have diabetes-related problems, such as eye, kidney, heart and nerve disease, and high blood pressure

Other questions may focus on your work environment and how much help you get at home from family and friends.

A Physical Exam

High blood glucose before and during pregnancy can worsen some diabetes problems, including eye, heart, and kidney disease. Your health care provider will want to make sure you're in the best possible shape before getting pregnant. You may need to have your blood pressure checked as well as get eye, cardiovascular, and neurological exams. Your regular provider can do some of these tests. Others may require a visit to a specialist.

Pat Yourself on the Back

Necessary Lab Tests

To make sure your body is ready for pregnancy, various lab tests may be done. To assess your average blood glucose level during the past two to three months, your health care provider will order an A1c blood test. Other blood and urine tests check how well your kidneys and thyroid gland are working.

Measuring Glucose Control

Keeping your blood glucose as close to normal as possible before and during pregnancy is a top priority. A developing baby's brain, heart, lungs, and kidneys form during the first eight weeks of pregnancy. High blood glucose at this stage can be especially harmful when many women don't realize they are pregnant yet. That's another reason it is so important for your blood glucose to be already under good control.

Your health care team will evaluate how close you are to reaching your blood glucose goals. If necessary, changes can be made to your diet, physical activity, or medication. For women with well-controlled diabetes, research has shown that the risk of having babies with birth defects is about the same as for women without diabetes.

Continuing Care

You'll need to see your health care provider regularly while trying to get pregnant. That way, you can make sure your body stays primed for the challenge ahead. Your provider may have you take prenatal vitamins as you try to get pregnant or as soon as you become pregnant. For example, you may take extra folate to help protect against birth defects.

Once you're pregnant, you may need to adjust your treatment plan as you go along. By working closely with your health care team, you're taking the best possible care of your baby. That's what being a mom is all about.



Making a healthy lifestyle change is its own reward. However, it never hurts to offer yourself a little extra incentive. To keep motivation high, give yourself well-deserved rewards for making progress.



The Way to Reward

When you set short-term goals, plan little rewards for yourself at the same time. Consider the following examples:

- If you reach your daily goal of exercising for 30 minutes, you might promise yourself 10 minutes of downtime to read a book or listen to music.
- If you reach your weekly goal of exercising on at least five days, you might plan to treat yourself to a movie.

You can also save toward bigger rewards for longer-term goals. For example, you might set aside a dollar every time you resist the urge to light up a cigarette and then treat yourself to a weekend trip after three smoke-free months.

How to Pick the Perfect Reward

The perfect reward is one that is:

- Timely, meaning you get it soon after meeting your goal
- Contingent on success, so earning the reward depends on making progress
- Desirable, so it's something you genuinely want

The reward can be either tangible, such as a CD or book, or intangible, such as treating yourself to quiet time or devoting an afternoon to a hobby. One caveat: Avoid using food as a reward because that can encourage unhealthy eating habits. Instead, look for other easy, low-cost or no-cost rewards, such as an afternoon bike ride or a long relaxing bath at the end of a stressful day.

Don't forget to praise yourself for a job well done. It's the little pats on the back that keep your spirits high—and your progress steady.



Anemia. A condition in which the blood has an abnormally low number of red blood cells or a lower than normal amount of hemoglobin. The most common symptom is tiredness.

Low-carbohydrate diet. An eating plan that reduces calories from carbohydrates (sugars and starches). Such diets tend to be relatively high in protein and fat.

Nicotine-replacement therapy. Taking nicotine in gums, patches, sprays, inhalers, or lozenges while giving up smoking. This approach lets people focus on the psychological side of quitting first, without the physical symptoms of withdrawal.

Preconception care. Health care before pregnancy. The goal is to head off problems that pose a risk to the mother or developing baby.

Red blood cells. Cells that carry oxygen attached to hemoglobin around the body. They are made in bone marrow, the spongy tissues inside bones.

HOW TO CONTROL BLOOD SUGAR When You're Sick

When you're sick, your body releases hormones to help fight off illness. Those same hormones interfere with the action of insulin, causing blood glucose to rise. For people with diabetes, that means glucose levels can quickly soar out of control.

To keep a minor illness from turning into a major crisis, the American Diabetes Association recommends that you and your health care provider have a sick-day plan that outlines how to:

- **Keep tabs on glucose.** Check your blood glucose more often than usual. A typical schedule during illness may be every four hours for someone with type 1 diabetes or four times a day for someone with type 2. Your health care provider can advise you on the best schedule for you.
- **Take your medication.** If you're on diabetes pills, keep taking them even if you are throwing up. In some cases, you may be switched to insulin temporarily. If you're already on insulin, you may need to increase the dose. Talk with your health care provider about how being sick may affect the way you use medication.
- **Adjust your diet.** Stick to your normal meal plan if you can, adding extra calorie-free fluids, such as water. If you can't eat as usual, try eating gelatin, crackers, soups, and applesauce. When these foods are too much to keep down, you may need to stick to fluids and near-fluids, such as nondiet sodas, juice, frozen juice bars, and sherbet. Have your sick-day meal plan ready in advance and keep a small stock of these foods and drinks on hand.

Call Your Provider When You:

- Have been sick or have had a fever for a couple of days and aren't getting better
- Have experienced vomiting or diarrhea for two to three hours and cannot keep down more than one meal and fluids
- Take insulin and your blood glucose stays higher than 200 mg/dl even after taking any extra insulin your sick-day plan calls for
- Take diabetes pills and your premeal blood glucose is higher than 200 mg/dl for more than 24 hours
- Have symptoms of ketoacidosis (shortness of breath, fruity-smelling breath, very dry mouth, nausea, and vomiting)



Is a LOW-FAT or LOW-CARB Diet Better for Weight Loss?

Which is better for losing weight, a low-carb diet or a low-fat one? Researchers are still debating this weighty issue. One thing is clear: The key to weight loss is eating fewer calories.

Decoding the Diets

Low-carb and low-fat diets differ in the types of food they include and limit. Here's how:

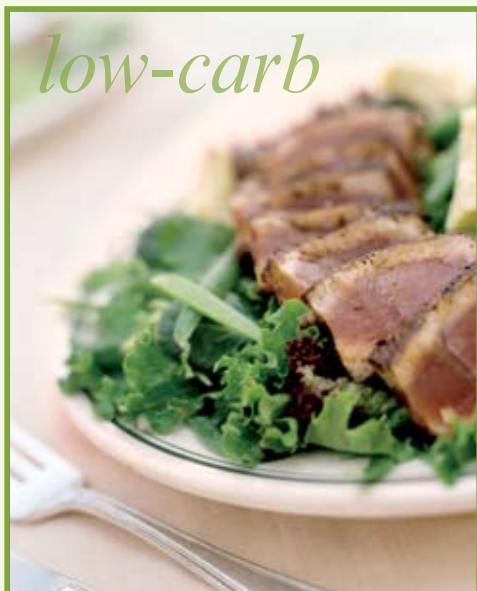
- **Low-carb diets** reduce the calories you get from sugary and starchy foods. Bread, pasta, potatoes, rice, and cereal are limited. Instead, you usually eat more protein-rich foods, such as meat, fish, cheese, eggs, and nuts, as well as vegetables.
- **Low-fat diets** reduce the calories you get from fats. Baked goods, high-fat snacks, fatty meats, and coconut and palm oils are limited. Fruits, vegetables, low-fat grains, beans, poultry, fish, low-fat dairy products, and lean meats become the focus.

Both low-carb and low-fat diets could help you shed pounds. A recent study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* showed that people on a low-carb diet lost slightly more weight over a two-year period than those on a low-fat diet. However, the low-carb dieters also consumed more saturated fat. Over time, eating this way could increase the risk for heart disease.

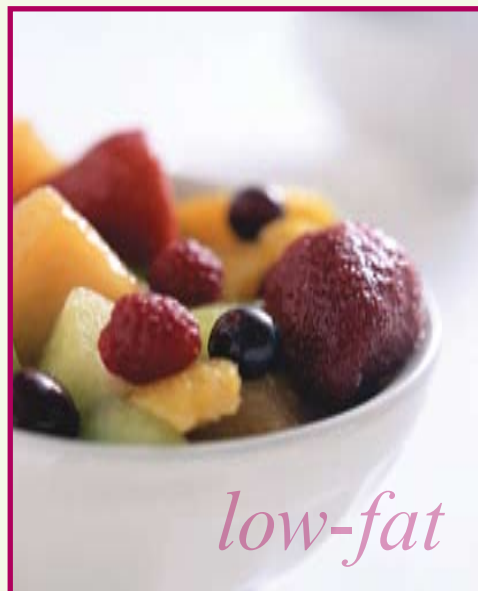
People on a low-fat diet consume less saturated and trans fats—the kinds of fats that are bad for the heart. They also tend to eat more foods that are rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber, and healthful omega-3 fatty acids.

The Bottom Line

To lose weight, you'll still need to balance the calories taken in through food with those burned off by exercise. Talk with your health care provider to see whether one of these diets could fit into your overall diabetes management plan.



low-carb



low-fat

Spicy Baked Fish

Serves four



Ingredients

- 1 lb. cod (or other fish) fillet
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tsp. commercial spicy seasoning, salt-free
- Nonstick cooking spray, as needed

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray casserole dish with nonstick cooking oil spray. Wash and dry fish. Place in dish. Drizzle with oil and seasoning mixture. Bake uncovered for 15 minutes or until fish flakes with fork. Cut into four pieces. Serve with rice.

Per Serving

Calories 134, Total fat 5 g (Saturated fat 1 g), Cholesterol 60 mg, Sodium 93 mg, Total fiber 0 g, Protein 21 g, Carbohydrates less than 1, Potassium 309 mg

This recipe is from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

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