



Taking charge of
your diabetes.

You can take charge of diabetes.

If you have diabetes, you may have questions. What is diabetes? How is it treated? Will I always have to take medicine?

Read this booklet and learn about diabetes. The more you know, the easier managing diabetes can be.



4 simple steps to help you take charge:



Step 1

Learn about diabetes.



Step 2

Know your diabetes ABCs.



Step 3

Manage your diabetes.



Step 4

Get routine care.



Health log: Check out the health log on page 13 of this booklet. Use it to track your health information. Be sure to bring it to your next doctor visit.

1



Learn about diabetes.

Diabetes happens when your blood glucose is too high. Blood glucose is the same thing as blood sugar. Everyone needs some glucose, or sugar. It gives the body energy to keep going. But too much is not healthy. It can be a serious health problem.

Glucose comes from the food you eat. It's also made in your liver and muscles. Insulin is a chemical the body makes. Insulin attaches to your body's cells to absorb glucose from the bloodstream. The cells then turn glucose into energy.

Without proper insulin, the glucose doesn't make it into the cells. It just stays in the blood and the blood sugar level gets too high. This results in diabetes.

The 2 most common types of diabetes are:

Type 1.

There is little or no insulin made by the pancreas. Type 1 is most often seen in young people.

Type 2.

There's not enough insulin. Or the body can't use insulin the way it should.



Medicines.

If you have diabetes, your doctor may prescribe one or more medicines. Some can help control blood sugar. Some can help avoid other health risks. Talk to your doctor about what medicines are right for you.

Diabetes medicines treat diabetes. They help control blood sugar. Some are taken as a pill. Others, like insulin, are taken as a shot.

Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitor or angiotensin receptor blocker (ARB) medicines lower blood pressure and reduce strain on the heart. They may also reduce the risk of having a heart attack or dying from heart disease.

Statins lower cholesterol, called LDL. Statins work to keep arteries clear and open.



All people with diabetes, both type 1 and type 2, need to eat healthy foods, stay at a healthy weight and be active every day.



Your primary care provider.

A primary care provider (PCP) may be the doctor you see for all your health concerns. If you don't have one, call the number on the back of your health plan member ID card. They can help you find one.

In some cases you may be referred to a specialist called an endocrinologist.

The PCP or specialist is critical to managing your diabetes. They will:

- Set the goal for your blood sugar levels. These numbers are different by age and other factors, so it's important to work with a doctor.
- Prescribe medicines, help plan a daily food diet and give exercise suggestions. These will help control your blood sugar.
- Teach you how to test and monitor your blood sugar level.
- Create action plans for when the blood sugar level is too high or too low.
- Tell you what doctor visits or tests you need, including A1C level tests that show if your diabetes is under control.

Working well with your doctor.

Consider these tips to make the most of doctor visits. This will help you and the doctor get the information needed to manage your diabetes.



1

Bring a list of everything you take. It may affect your treatment plan.

- Prescription medicines.
- Over-the-counter medicines.
- Supplements or herbs.
- Vitamins.

2

Bring your blood sugar level records and your Diabetes Health Log.

Talk about any changes that might be needed to your treatment plan.

3

Bring a list of all your questions for the doctor.

Bring a pen and paper to write down important things the doctor tells you.

4

Be sure your doctor:

- Tells you steps to take to keep you healthy.
- Creates a plan to treat your diabetes.
- Answers your questions.
- Listens to your concerns.

2



Know your diabetes ABCs.

Control your A1C (blood sugar test), blood pressure and cholesterol. This may help to lower your chances of having a heart attack, stroke or other diabetes problems.

Reach your ABC goals.

- Talk with your doctor about your ABC goals.
- Keep track of your ABC goals and results.
- Go to your doctor visits.
- Get your labs when they are due.



A is for A1C test.

This is a blood test that tells you the level of your blood sugar over a 2- to 3-month time. This test is different from testing your blood sugar at home with a meter. Your A1C test will be done at your doctor's office or lab.

- The goal for most people is **less than 7%**.
- You should have an A1C test at least 2 times a year.



B is for blood pressure.

If your blood pressure is high, it means that your heart is working harder. This puts you at higher risk for diabetes problems like stroke, heart attack and kidney and eye problems.

- The goal for most people with diabetes is a blood pressure of **130/80 or below**.
- You should have your blood pressure checked each time you visit the doctor.



C is for cholesterol.

Cholesterol-LDL is the bad cholesterol that builds up in your blood vessels. It causes your blood vessels to get smaller and harder. This can increase your risk for a heart attack. Your cholesterol is tested by a blood test. The test takes place at your doctor's office or lab.

- The cholesterol-LDL goal for people with diabetes is **less than 100**.
- You should have your cholesterol-LDL checked at least once a year.

3



Manage your diabetes.

Diabetes may be managed with a combination of medicine, meal planning and exercise. Managing it well can help prevent emergency situations like passing out or seizures. It can also help avoid serious health problems down the road.



Monitor blood sugar.

You may need to check your blood sugar. How often depends on the type of diabetes and the medicines used to manage it. Do it just how the doctor tells you.



Use prescribed medicine as directed.

Follow the doctor's instructions for when to take it and how much to take.



Plan meals and snacks.

- Learn what foods are good for you and which are not. Work with the doctor to create a meal plan.
- Ask if you should count the number of carbohydrates (carbs) you eat. Carbs raise blood sugar. They are in foods such as pasta, bread and cereal.



Make sure you are active.

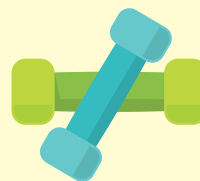
- Talk to the doctor about exercise and activities to do.
- Ask if blood sugar should be checked during active times.



Keep good records.



If you do not have a fitness plan, talk to your doctor before you begin. You can work out a safe plan together.



4



Getting care.

See your doctor for your routine diabetes care and talk with your doctor if your feelings about diabetes prevent you from taking care of yourself.

At each visit, you should get a:

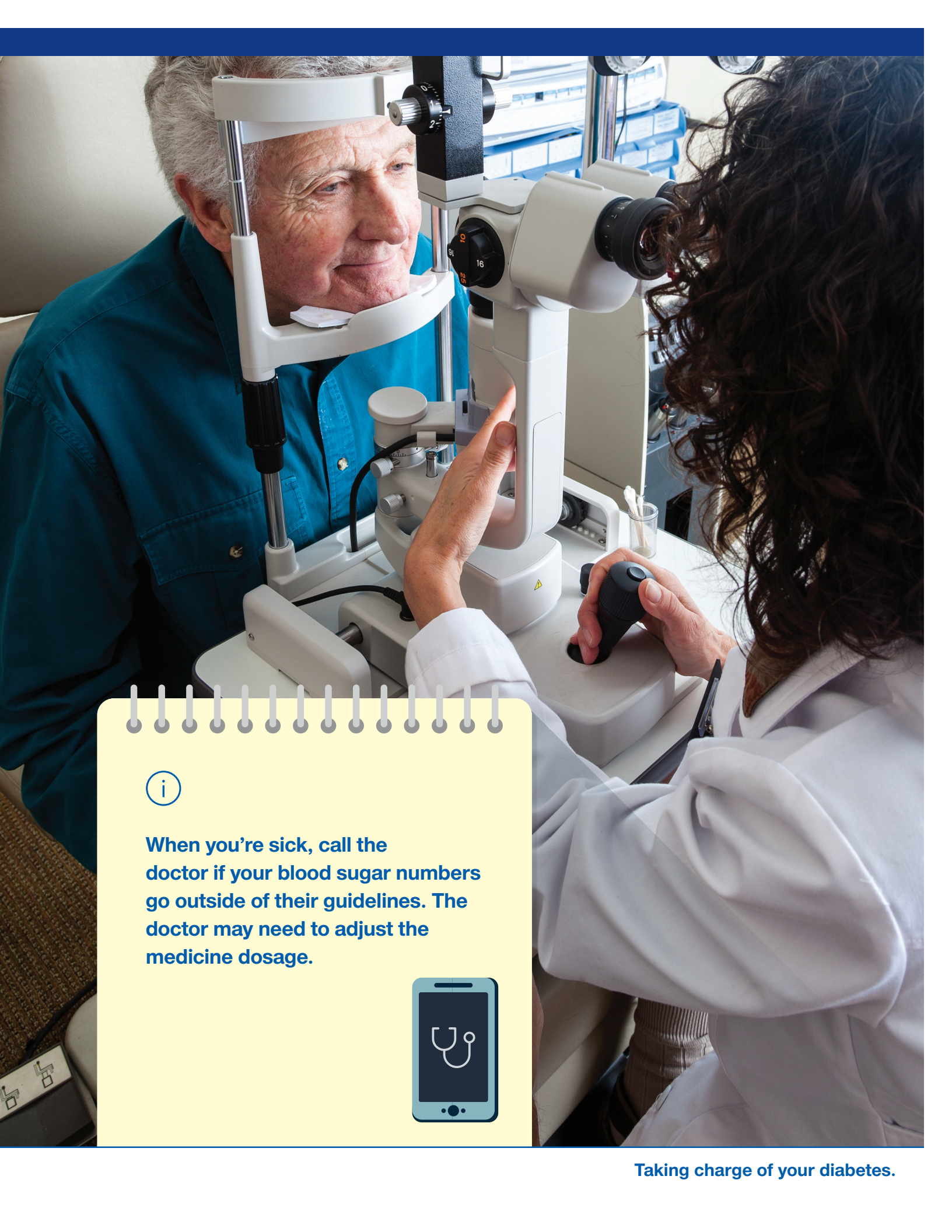
- Blood pressure check.
- Weight check.
- Foot check.

Twice a year, you'll need to get an/a:

- A1C blood test (your doctor may have you tested more often).
- Dental exam to prevent tooth and gum problems.

Once a year, you should get a:

- Cholesterol check.
- Eye exam (retinal) to check for eye problems and help prevent blindness.
- Urine test to check for kidney problems.
- Flu shot.



When you're sick, call the doctor if your blood sugar numbers go outside of their guidelines. The doctor may need to adjust the medicine dosage.





Protect your eyes and feet.

Diabetes can cause serious foot or eye problems. Sores or cuts on feet can lead to bad infections. And high blood sugar over time makes blood vessels in the eye weak or they can even burst. That can lead to retinopathy, a condition that can cause blindness.

There are other issues related to diabetes too, such as nerve damage, kidney problems, heart disease and stroke. Your doctor will tell you which screenings or tests you need.



Typical screenings and timing may be as follows:

- Blood pressure. Should be measured at each regular doctor's visit.
- Lipid screening. Get at 10 years of age or older, or soon after diagnosis. Repeat screening every 5 years if normal, and as recommended by your doctor.
- Mental health screening. Includes a check for coping, anxiety and diabetes distress generally starting at 7 or 8 years of age.
- Thyroid dysfunction and celiac disease screenings. May be recommended for type 1 diabetes — soon after diagnosis and regularly after that.



Help protect your feet.

- Be sure the doctor does a complete foot exam at least once a year.
- Treat cuts right away. Wash with soap and water. Cover even small cuts with bandages.
- Don't go barefoot. Make sure your shoes fit right.
- Wash your feet every day.
- Watch blisters, ingrown toenails or calluses carefully. They can lead to infection and wounds that won't heal.



Help protect your eyes.

- Keep blood sugar under control.
- Watch blood pressure. Be sure it's as close to normal as possible.
- Visit an eye doctor as recommended by your doctor. An eye test can find problems even before you notice them.
- Ask when you should have a test with dilated pupils.



See an eye doctor right away if you have:

- Blurry vision or vision changes from day to day.
- Dark or floating spots.
- Flashes of light.
- Any vision loss, including spots that are hazy and not clear.



Your Diabetes Health Log.

This chart will help you keep track of your health “numbers.” Bring it to your next doctor visit.

Exam	Date/Goal	Date/Finding	Date/Finding
Blood Pressure			
LDL Cholesterol			
HDL Cholesterol			
Total Cholesterol			
A1C			
Urine Protein			
Dilated Eye Exam			
Foot Exam			

Vaccinations	Date/Notes
Pneumococcal (pneumonia) Ask your doctor	
Influenza (flu); yearly	

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends the hepatitis B vaccine for people who have diabetes (ask your doctor).

Medications		
Name	Dose	Directions

-PATIENT

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Make an action plan. Your doctor will let you know how often you should check your blood sugar, what to do if you have any symptoms and any steps you should take to help prevent problems.





Helpful resources.



For more information, visit these websites:

American Diabetes Association

diabetes.org

National Diabetes Education Program

ndep.nih.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

cdc.gov/diabetes

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan

myuhc.com/CommunityPlan

UHCCommunityPlan.com/CA



Important contacts:

Doctor's name: _____ **Phone:** _____

Pharmacy: _____ **Phone:** _____

Urgent Care: _____ **Phone:** _____

Hospital: _____ **Phone:** _____

If there's an emergency, call 911.



Notes:

UHCCommunityPlan.com/CA



References: American Diabetes Association, diabetes.org

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