



BLOOD SUGAR MANAGEMENT GUIDE

**What Happens If I Don't Keep My Blood Sugar
in a Healthy Range?**

BLOOD SUGAR MANAGEMENT GUIDE

What happens if I don't take the necessary steps to help control my blood sugar?

Having type 2 diabetes means that your body has a harder time keeping your blood glucose (sugar) in a healthy range.¹ These blood sugar highs and lows can have an impact on your health over time. The good news is that there are ways to help manage it. While some people can manage their type 2 diabetes through healthy eating and staying active, your doctor may prescribe medicine to help keep your blood sugar on target.^{2,3}

If you are prescribed medication, it's very important to take it as your doctor has prescribed to help control your blood sugar. Remember that different medications work in different ways to help keep your blood sugar in a healthy range.^{2,3}



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It may not be something you want to think about, but if your blood sugar remains too high for too long, it can potentially hurt your body and increase your risk for many other serious health problems.⁴

WHAT CAN HAPPEN IF BLOOD SUGAR STAYS TOO HIGH



Brain and Heart

High blood sugar levels can damage your nerves and blood vessels over time.⁵ Many people with type 2 diabetes can also suffer from high blood pressure⁶ and potentially have issues with high cholesterol.^{5,7} Together, these related issues can cause your blood vessels to become narrowed or clogged by fatty deposits that can block oxygen and other needed materials from reaching your heart (leading to a heart attack) or your brain (leading to a stroke).⁸

Eyes

High blood sugar levels can damage the small blood vessels in your eye's retina. This can lead to a condition known as diabetic retinopathy which can affect how you see. You may not notice any changes in your vision at first, or experience any pain, but if this condition isn't treated, you can lose some or all of your eyesight permanently. If the condition is caught early, laser surgery may help treat it.⁹ High blood pressure can also damage the tiny blood vessels in your eyes.^{9,10} It's important that you have your eyes checked at least once a year by an eye care professional and that you let your healthcare team know immediately if you notice any changes in your vision.¹⁰

Teeth and Gums

Sugar is present in the saliva that keeps your mouth wet. If these sugar levels aren't kept in check, they can help harmful plaque germs grow. Plaque germs can lead to tooth decay, cavities, gum disease, and tooth loss.^{11,12} To help take good care of your teeth, schedule regular checkups with your dentist, preferably every 6 months.¹¹

WHAT CAN HAPPEN IF BLOOD SUGAR STAYS TOO HIGH (CONT'D)

Kidneys

High levels of blood sugar can overwork your kidneys, and, over time, they can become damaged and may lead to kidney failure.^{13,14} This condition can become very serious and require you to use a machine to filter your blood (dialysis) or to get a kidney transplant.¹³

Sexual Health

High blood sugar can sometimes damage blood vessels and nerves, which can lead to challenges in maintaining physical intimacy.¹⁵⁻¹⁷

Nerves, Legs, and Feet

Over time, high blood sugar can injure the walls of the tiny blood vessels that nourish your nerves (neuropathy), especially in your legs.^{18,19} Neuropathy can hurt, or it can also lower your ability to feel pain, heat, and cold.¹⁹ Another potential concern related to high blood sugar is known as peripheral arterial disease (PAD). PAD happens when blood vessels in the leg are narrowed or blocked by fatty deposits that hinder the blood flow to your legs and feet.²⁰ Like neuropathy, PAD can lead to leg pain, numbness, and tingling. It can also result in sores or infections on your feet or legs that do not heal normally.²⁰ To help you stay in the best health, make sure your healthcare provider checks your feet at least once a year.²¹

Skin

High blood sugar levels often cause dry skin, lead to skin infections, and cause itching. Other type 2 diabetes-related skin conditions include diabetic blisters and digital sclerosis (tight, thick, waxy skin on the back of the hands and sometimes toes and forehead).²²



TAKING YOUR MEDICATIONS



By following your medication treatment plan, you may be able to help manage your diabetes and the other health problems that can occur if your blood sugar stays too high.²³ If you need help remembering to take your medication, there are ways to do this. It may help to keep a list of all your medications, both prescription and over the counter, and track them throughout the day, or you can use a pillbox. Talk to your doctor or type 2 diabetes healthcare team about any questions or concerns you may have about your health or your medications.

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