

Control your diabetes *For Life:*

Circular 569 D

Navigating the Health Care System

■ Diabetes standards of care were first developed 15 years ago to define state-of-the-art diabetes treatment.

■ Some people with diabetes do not receive the level of care defined by the diabetes standards of care.

■ People who do receive all of the diabetes standards of care are healthier and less likely to develop diabetes complications.

■ Many health care providers are not aware of the diabetes standards of care.

■ Diabetes education and equipment are covered by most insurance policies.

Diabetes Standards of Care

While diabetes has been known as a disease for at least 2,000 years, it has only been within the last 15 years that research has shown a link between controlling diabetes and preventing or postponing diabetes complications. The American Diabetes Association has developed the **Standards of Medical Care for Patients with Diabetes**. These standards guide health care providers and patients through the complex process of managing diabetes. The standards define specific tests, treatments, and education that are the basis of state-of-the-art diabetes management.



Diabetes is an ongoing disease that you and your health care provider will manage together for the rest of your life. Some people with diabetes do not receive the level of care defined by the standards of care for diabetes. People who do receive the standards of care control their diabetes better, are less likely to develop diabetes complications, and will live a healthier life. To insure you get the best care possible, visit your provider every three to four months, even if you feel fine.

At each visit, have your provider do the following:

- **Check your weight:** Changes in weight may require changes in diet, medications, or other care plans.
- **Check your blood glucose:** Know your “goals” for blood glucose control. Any changes in blood glucose may mean that you need to look at your diet, medications, or other diabetes self-care habits.
- **Check your blood pressure:** High blood pressure increases your risk for heart attack, stroke, and circulation problems and can worsen eye and kidney damage from diabetes.
- **Check your feet:** Numbness or burning, infections, sores, calluses, or other problems may require treatment by a podiatrist (foot doctor).



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- **Review your goals for blood glucose, blood pressure, and blood lipids** (cholesterol and triglycerides): Talk about your progress in meeting these goals.
- **Visit with a diabetes educator:** Ask about your diabetes self-care skills, diet, medications, monitoring, exercise, sick days, or any other concerns.

Two to four times a year:

- **Hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c)**

Twice a year:

- **Dental** check-up

Once a year you should also have the following:

- **Dilated eye exam** to look for diabetic eye disease
- **Urine test** to check your kidneys
- **Blood lipids** (cholesterol and triglycerides) and **EKG** to check your heart health
- **Flu vaccination**

You also should ask your doctor about a **pneumonia shot** and a **TB test**, if you have never had them.

Becoming Your Own Health Care Advocate

When it comes to your health—you take center stage! Take an active role as a consumer in the health care system. Keep records of when you have tests done, what the results were, and what tests need to be done. Many health care providers are not aware of the diabetes standards of care. Use your records to remind your provider about the standards of care to ensure you get the best care possible. Never neglect diabetes self-care or medical treatment due to financial difficulties. Talk to your health care provider about low- or no-cost prescriptions or treatment options. Diabetes education and equipment are now covered by most insurance policies. If you are denied coverage, call your American Diabetes Association at 1-800-DIABETES for help.

Where to Go for More Information

■ Your health care provider

■ American Diabetes Association:
1-800-DIABETES
www.diabetes.org

■ National Diabetes Education Program:
1-800-438-5383 or
visit the World Wide Web at
ndep.nih.gov or
www.cdc.gov

■ New Mexico Diabetes Prevention and Control Program
www.diabetesnm.org

■ Your county Extension office

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