

# What is my risk of getting **cardiovascular disease?**



# Type 2 Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)

## What is the connection between type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease?

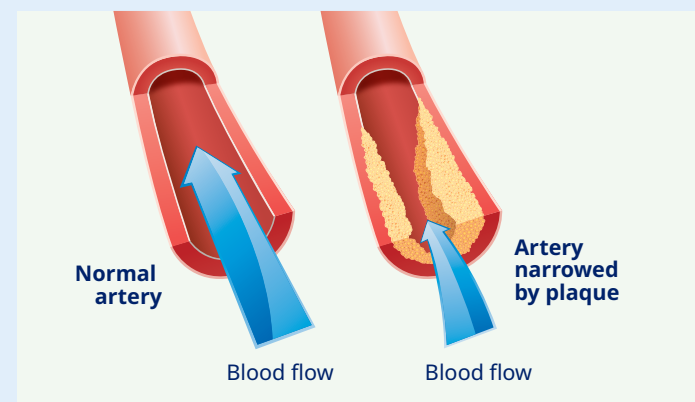
Diabetes is a condition that causes blood glucose (*blood sugar*) to rise. If not managed over time, high blood glucose can damage blood vessels and nerves that control your heart. This can lead to serious health problems, including cardiovascular disease, or CVD.

The term “cardiovascular disease” includes all types of problems that affect your heart and blood vessels. CVD is the number one cause of death in people living with type 2 diabetes.



## What is atherosclerosis?

Blood vessels carry blood throughout your body. A process called **atherosclerosis** is when plaque (*fatty deposits*) builds up in the walls of your arteries, a type of blood vessel that carries blood with oxygen and nutrients to your body. This makes it hard for the blood to flow through. That lessens the amount of oxygen and other nutrients reaching the body. If a blood clot or a plaque forms, it can block the blood flow, leading to a serious health problem.



## Why does type 2 diabetes increase my risk?

People living with type 2 diabetes are also more likely to have other conditions that can raise the risk for developing CVD caused by atherosclerosis:

- High blood pressure
- Too much LDL (*bad*) cholesterol and low HDL (*good*) cholesterol
- High triglycerides, a type of fat in your blood

Be sure to get regular checkups to keep track of your diabetes and heart health.

### Stroke:

A blood clot blocks a blood vessel in the brain or neck

### Coronary heart disease:

Plaque builds up in or leading to the heart

### Peripheral artery disease (PAD):

Blood vessels stiffen in the legs and feet



## What are some symptoms of heart disease?

Symptoms may include:

### Shortness of breath

### Fatigue

### Pain in your:

- Chest (angina)
- Throat
- Back
- Legs
- Neck
- Jaw
- Upper abdomen
- Arms

### Weakness or numbness in your arms or legs



Call your doctor right away if you have symptoms, questions, or concerns.

## Are there tests for CVD?

During an office visit, your doctor may check your blood glucose, blood pressure, weight, and do blood tests to see if your cholesterol and triglyceride levels are high. They may also ask that you do other tests to check your heart health, such as:

- **Echocardiogram (echo)**  
examines how thick the heart muscle is and how well it pumps
- **Electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG)**  
measures the heart's electrical activity
- **Exercise stress test (treadmill test)**  
checks how well the heart functions when it's working hard



## How can I lower my risk of CVD?

An important way to keep your heart healthy is to manage your diabetes. Try to keep your blood glucose in range for as long and as often as you can. You can also make lifestyle changes that may lower CVD risk or keep it from getting worse, as well as help you to manage your diabetes:

- ✓ Maintain a heart-healthy diet
- ✓ Maintain a healthy weight
- ✓ Be physically active every day
- ✓ Keep your blood pressure on target
- ✓ Keep your cholesterol on target
- ✓ Take your prescribed medicines
- ✓ Limit how much alcohol you drink
- ✓ Stop smoking (or don't start)
- ✓ Manage stress

Talk to your diabetes care team to make sure you are doing all you can to make healthy choices.



**Atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease, or ASCVD, is the leading cause of death in people living with type 2 diabetes.**

## What medicines do you take?

Your doctor may also prescribe medicines that can help keep your blood glucose, blood pressure, cholesterol, and triglycerides close to your target levels.

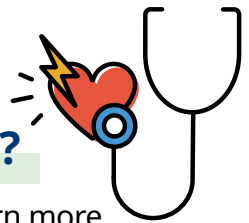
Keep track of your diabetes medicines and any other prescribed medicines you take. Write them down below.

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## Do you have questions?

Talk to your health care team to learn more about what you can do to start lowering your risk for CVD.

Ask your health care team any questions you may have, such as:

? Am I at risk for CVD caused by atherosclerosis?

? Are there any medicines I can take to help lower my risks?

? \_\_\_\_\_

? \_\_\_\_\_

? \_\_\_\_\_

**Bring this list to your next appointment.**



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