



# AADE7 Self-Care Behaviors® REDUCING RISKS

*Reducing risks means doing behaviors that minimize or prevent complications and negative outcomes of prediabetes and diabetes.*

Examples of these behaviors are making positive lifestyle changes, participating in a type 2 diabetes prevention or diabetes self-management education and support program, getting adequate sleep, and getting the recommended vaccines and health screenings. Reducing risks means you need to acknowledge that preventive actions you do now will benefit you years from now and that you have the power to change your health outcomes.

## LEARN ABOUT YOUR RISKS

Talk to your diabetes care and education specialist and healthcare provider about health risks such as kidney damage, nerve damage and vision loss. They can explain why complications happen and how they can be avoided. You can develop the self-management skills needed to support and maintain a healthy lifestyle by meeting with your diabetes care and education specialist.

### THE FOUR CRITICAL TIMES TO SEE A DIABETES CARE AND EDUCATION SPECIALIST

When you are first diagnosed with diabetes	At least once a year
When you experience changes that affect your self-management such as financial or emotional distress	When you have changes in your provider, insurance or living situation.



**Question:** What kinds of health checks give you the best chance of keeping your heart healthy and avoiding short and long-term complications?

**Answer:** Research has shown that managing your glucose (sugar), blood pressure and cholesterol levels, getting regular oral health checks, eye checks, kidney checks and taking care of your feet all lead to less chance of developing complications or of existing complications getting worse

#### CHECKLIST

- GLUCOSE
- CHOLESTEROL
- EYES
- KIDNEYS
- BLOOD PRESSURE
- ORAL HEALTH
- FEET

## REDUCE YOUR RISK OF COMPLICATIONS

Schedule regular medical checkups



Get screened for sleep apnea

Get screened for hearing loss



Follow your healthy eating plan

Commit to moving more and sitting less



Take medications as prescribed

Monitor your glucose using CGM or blood glucose meters



Don't smoke or vape



Brush and floss your teeth daily

Get a flu shot



Get pneumonia and hepatitis B vaccinations

Discuss any sadness or distress with your provider

Check your feet daily for redness, sores, open wounds



## Get Help When You Need It

Do you find prediabetes or diabetes too hard to handle? Do you often feel overwhelmed or sad?

Your diabetes care and education specialist or mental health expert can help. Tell them about your feelings, especially if you:

- Struggle to manage your diabetes
- Have negative thoughts
- Avoid seeing your healthcare providers
- Have little interest or don't find pleasure in your activities
- Sleep most of the day or are not able to sleep
- Have lost your appetite or are overeating
- Feel others in your family don't care

## word wall

### Short-term complications

These are when you experience high or low glucose (sugar) levels that put you at risk of passing out or being hospitalized.

### Long-term complications

These can happen after many years and include heart attacks, strokes, decreased vision or blindness, decreased kidney function, numbness or tingling in your hands or feet, slowing down of stomach emptying, foot deformities, sexual problems and skin problems.

TYPE OF HEALTH CHECK	FREQUENCY
A1C (a blood test that measures your average blood glucose level during the past 3 months)	Every 3 to 6 months
Blood pressure	Every visit
Lipids (blood fats) HDL (good cholesterol) LDL (bad cholesterol) Triglycerides (blood fats that come from food and are made by the body)	At least every year
Eye checkup	Every year
Kidney function tests	Every year
Dental checkup	At least every year
Foot checkup (for nerve function and blood flow)	At least every year

## BREAK TASKS INTO SMALLER PARTS

Your diabetes care and education specialist can help you with planning and scheduling recommended health checks. This task can be less overwhelming when you divide them up into smaller, doable tasks. Make a list of tasks and decisions, then work on them one at a time until you have completed the list. Here is a sample task list for getting an annual eye exam:

- Find out insurance coverage and cost for the eye exam.
- Identify eye providers in your network and select one.
- Call and schedule the appointment.
- Make arrangements to allow time for the appointment.
- Actively participate in the appointment.

Making sure you get recommended health checks and sticking to your treatment plan are positive steps you can take to reduce your risk of complications. Taking an active role in keeping your heart, kidneys and eyes as healthy as possible helps you achieve your desired quality of life. Act early so you can stay healthy in the long run! A diabetes care and education specialist can be a great resource for helping you understand how to reduce your risks. Ask your provider to refer you. You deserve it!

To learn how a diabetes care and education specialist can help you, visit [DiabetesEducator.org/LivingWithDiabetes](https://DiabetesEducator.org/LivingWithDiabetes). For more on this and other behaviors for better diabetes management, visit [DiabetesEducator.org/AADE7](https://DiabetesEducator.org/AADE7).